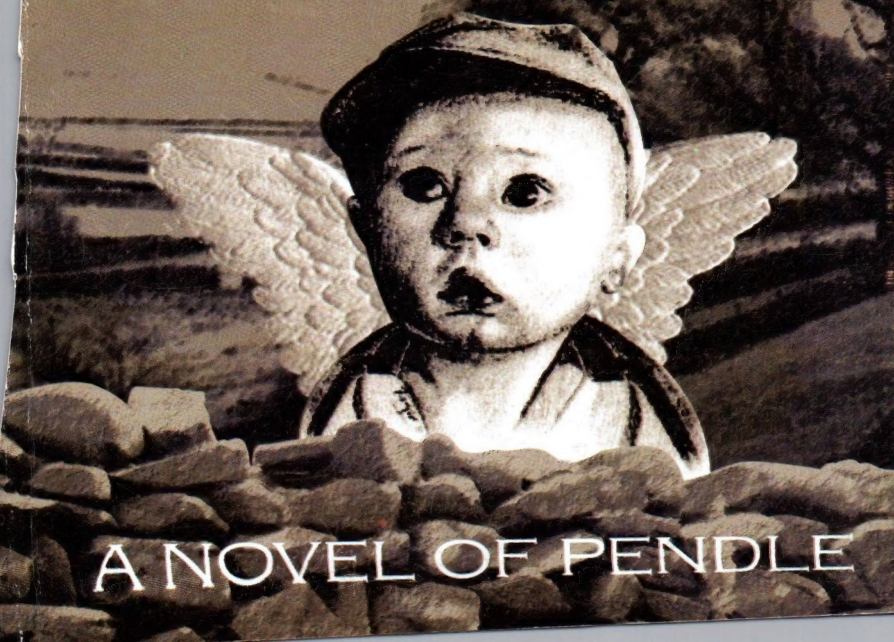


Kate Mulholland

THE ICARUS
LEGACY



A NOVEL OF PENDLE

THE ICARUS LEGACY

by

Kate Mulholland

Kate Mulholland is a member of the
Society of Authors

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Also by Kate Mulholland

A Cry of Innocence
(a novel of the Pendle Witches)

The King's Shilling

Many thanks to
Richard Hull, who, over many years,
has transcribed my scribbling and
translated my voice recordings
and prepared it for print.



Kate Mulholland has lived all of her life in Lancashire and has studied local history.

Following the success of "A Cry of Innocence" and "The King's Shilling", she now presents "The Icarus Legacy" - believe it or not!

THE ICARUS LEGACY

PROLOGUE

1940s

The track was stony, indeed, looking closer, we could see it had once been cobbled. Lichen and weeds grew in the nicks. Overhead the branches of the trees met, forming a vaulted green dome, shutting out the daylight. Today the wind blew strongly, bringing drops of rain through the rustling leaves.

My father and I had set off on our regular Sunday morning walk an hour earlier, fortified by a boiled egg breakfast. This was 1942, wartime, and I was often told I was lucky to have eggs as they were rationed, along with most other items of food. Dad knew a farmer, who, in return for Dad's expertise in car engines, would let us have eggs. Sometimes, around Christmas, there would be a leg of pork if, as the farmer told us "The man from the Ministry didn't come checking"!

"Careful Kathie, the rain is making the track

slippery". I clung onto my father's arm, as he spoke.

"I don't remember coming down here before," he continued.

We had had to make a detour because the lane down which we usually came had been blocked off with foliage. Trees had been felled in patches and in those gaps ammunition was being stored.

"In case the Germans come," my father had told me. "Then we would have a resistance movement like they have in France, they were invaded more easily because there was no sea between France and Germany. Luckily for us we have the English Channel to protect us."

I would listen as my dad patiently explained how England had been at war with Germany before, from 1914 to 1918 when we had beaten them. Dad had then served in the navy on HMS Valorous.

Suddenly, I tripped over a protruding stone, and before my dad could stop me I rolled over and over, eventually coming to a halt where a stone missing from the track had caused a puddle of water to form, my face was immersed in its murky depths. I began to sob and cry due to the shock. Dad lifted me up and with a handkerchief dabbed at my muddy face.

The noise carried to a dog which doing his

“on guard” duty came running up the track to investigate, barking ferociously. At the sight of this dog, a cross between a lion and a collie, so it seemed to me, I cried even more.

From a barely visible cluster of stone buildings situated at the base of the track issued a shrill whistle. Through the rain, now falling in torrents, emerged the profile of a woman waving in a welcoming manner. In addition to the relief of seeing the dog’s ferocity subdued, this sign of welcome comforted my father who, still carrying me went towards her.

“My little girl has fallen and I am afraid she has grazed her face and knees,” he told her, setting me down.

The woman reached out and took my hand, “I’ll find a cloth to wipe your wounds dear,” she said. My leg was now bleeding profusely, and my lip trembled, I was again on the verge of tears as I limped beside her.

On our right was a large building full of old cart wheels, junk, the paraphernalia of years. I noticed a larger propeller-like object made of stone or iron as we passed. My father commented to the woman that the old machinery looked interesting.

“You must have a look around and talk to my husband,” she said. “He be struggling with

his old wagon, we can't get the parts, being wartime and we're only allowed to use it on our farm business, for market or to collect proven. He's got a bad back, can't do much. I'll take you to him when I've fixed up the nipper here."

On the front of the house was chiselled Kittycaul House. There were about four narrow windows on each side of the stone porch that dominated the front of the house. My father told me that these were mullion windows dating from the seventeenth century, "A very old house indeed, it's probably got a priest hole." He told me of the 16th and 17th centuries when it was forbidden to be a Roman Catholic. People hid their priests in secret rooms. I was enchanted at the thought, being unaware of the cruelty of those times.

We followed her into a dim, poorly lit kitchen, the floor was flagged and polished by decades of use. In the wall facing us was the largest stone fireplace I had ever seen, you could almost have walked around inside it. A blazing log fire relieved the darkness of the room and from it hung cooking containers – their contents sizzling and spitting into the fire. No wartime shortages seemed to be apparent there, in that remote, rural kitchen!

Two more dogs slept by the hearth, one

cocked her ear and sleepily opened one eye, dropping back to sleep again when we posed no threat. Several kittens tumbled over the prostrate dogs, fighting with each other.

My tears had stopped and I gazed in delight at the scene before me. In the dimness of the room I had not noticed another occupant until I heard a throaty cough. I turned quickly and sitting in a corner, nursing a kitten was a boy aged about twelve. He smiled shyly at me.

The woman spoke, "Now I'm Mary Hewitt, this here is my son William". We nodded at each other.

"Gilbert Joy, my daughter Kathie". My father held out his hand and Mary Hewitt shook it.

"There have been Hewitts in Stubbs Wood for hundreds of years, we own it and we have two hundred and fifty acres too. Bigger landowners have tried to take it from us. Stories passed down in the family tell of the time of the witches when one of the Hewitts was hanged at Lancaster. All innocent you know, these Lancashire witches, all victims of ignorance, spite and greed. My husband has a book with pictures drawn in those days. He may show it to you". All the time she was busily cleaning my bleeding knee and gently wiping my face.

"Now I'll make a brew of tea," she turned

and picked up a kettle already simmering on a hob.

"I married Jim Hewitt in 1919. There I was at Skipton market, fresh out of Tosside. My dad killed on the Somme and my mother dead of the flu that followed the war. I was just a poor girl looking for work."

She busied herself putting cups and saucers onto the large, scrubbed, kitchen table. "I was standing with my friend Maggie and when Jim Hewitt headed in our direction she said he was a hunchback, and we should be careful. I asked her since when had being a hunchback made you a bad employer?"

"Sugar, milk?, " she asked.

"And was he a hunchback?" I had listened eagerly to her tale.

"Kathie, don't be rude, you shouldn't ask questions," my father remonstrated with me.

The lassie's all right, didn't mean no harm did you love?" she patted my head. "Bonny red hair you have too," she said. "No he wasn't a hunchback, oh no, you've never heard of the Hewitts of Stubbs Wood?" turning to my dad.

My father shook his head. "We live in the town. I only come walking in the country at weekends," he told her.

"Jim Hewitt married me six months after I

came to work here. He was a good employer, a kind man and I didn't mind his deformity, I was grateful for a good home," she paused gazing into the fire, for a moment or two quite lost in thought.

"But I thought you said he wasn't a hunchback," I couldn't help from butting in again.

My Dad frowned at me again, I knew it was for asking questions so I wouldn't look at him!

"No dear, he had another affliction passed down through the Hewitts for centuries. Some have it, some haven't. The one hanged as a witch had it, that is why she was picked on. Aye, if you had a cast in your eye, a wart on your nose, a mole on your chin you were likely to be tried a witch in those days".

I was entranced, no-one had ever told me such a tale before, I wanted to hear more, my father didn't look too happy. I was a nervous child and I expect he thought I might be afraid.

What was this affliction, I was longing to ask but one glance at my Dad and I kept silent!

The boy spoke, "I'd like a cup of tea Mam, if it's no trouble".

"Surely William, I quite forgot you," pouring the tea, she put the cup on a small tray and took it to him. The cat leaped onto the floor.

"We don't get visitors here, in fact we keep the track entrance covered, but we've had the authorities round lately because of the ammunition stores, so that's why it was open for you," she told us.

"I thought I hadn't seen it before," my Dad looked like he had just sorted out a puzzle.

"William has the affliction, that's why you don't get up, isn't it love," she looked at the boy who even in the dim light I could see had coloured up, he looked so embarrassed I felt sorry for him.

"Mum, please," he pleaded.

She was carried away now, into her thoughts, and there was no stopping her.

"I had a little girl in the first year after my marriage to Jim, they took her away, back in 1920. I went to the hospital because the midwife said I should. Jim drove the cart through the woods to Clitheroe, snowing it was," she began to cry.

"Oh! Mam, don't cry," William implored her from his seat in the shadows.

"I held her you know. Then they showed me her back," she shuddered at the memory.

"They said they would take her away and operate on her to make her normal. I said no, no operation, please send for Jim," she rocked backwards and forwards.

My father and I were both in thrall at the story, the flames from the fire cast shadows on the wall. I moved nearer to him and put his arm around me, we waited, breath held for the end of the story.

“They took her away from me and after they came to tell me she had died. They had the cheek to say it was for the best. They killed her. I lost control, I screamed and screamed. They stuck needles in me, put me to sleep and took me to Calderstones,” she cried quietly as she told the tale.

“Jim got the vicar and he found me in Calderstones and brought me home. In shock I was, ’twas awful what they did, and not so long ago. When I was having William Jim says, ‘No midwives, no hospitals, I birth my sheep and I’ll birth you, if the affliction passes on only we will know’”.

I stared into the dim shadows at William. Did he get the affliction? What was it? Why didn’t he get up?

There was an awkward silence and Dad and I finished drinking our tea. Putting his cup down Dad said we should really be setting off for home.

“You must say hello to Jim, he’s out there. He’ll show you the book,” she said, walking out of the house in front of us, I waved shyly

at William and Dad said goodbye to him. He raised his hand in salute and smiled, I smiled in return.

We walked out over the cobbled courtyard, two or three kittens at our heels. One of the dogs also accompanying us.

What a strange, exciting time we were having. We could hear the sound of hammering, this must be Jim I thought as we saw a man fixing a wheel on a cart, as we approached the wheel fell and Dad jumped forward and caught it just in time.

"Thank you kindly sir," he said, "I saw you go into the house. I hope the little girl has recovered from her fall?"

"Mrs Hewitt made me better," I smiled up at his wife.

"This is Mr Joy and Kathie," she introduced us, "and this is my husband Jim". The two then shook hands.

"Mrs Hewitt said you would show us a book with a history of your family," I piped up.

"Kathie don't be rude," my father again remonstrated with me.

Seeing my crestfallen face Jim smiled. He had a sad, lined face, framed by wispy grey hair, he was balding on top, probably in his fifties. He picked up a pipe. My father felt in

his pocket for his pipe and pouch and offered the tobacco to Jim.

“Thank you kindly sir,” he said filling his pipe and lighting it. “Its one of the things I have difficulty obtaining, I don’t go to town very often”. Plumes of smoke were now rising from the pipe and I smelled the fragrance. “I’ll have to grow my own tobacco I think,” he said jokingly. “If our climate would be any good,” they both laughed and Jim adjusted the sack over his shoulders.

“Well dear,” he smiled at me, reaching up onto a shelf he picked up a book. Flicking it open I could see the pages were worn, yellowing and thin.

“Seventeenth century, this book,” he told us. “Been in my family and in our house all this time. One of my ancestors was hung as a witch because she had an affliction that can still plague us”.

He showed us a picture, Dad and I leaned closer. The woman in the picture was being dragged to a pond, by several other men and women, she looked terrified.

“King James brought out a punishment for who he thought were witches,” we looked closer.

“Ducked people in water, if they sank they

were innocent, if they floated they were guilty – died anyway,” he said sadly.

Sunlight suddenly lit up the picture in the book and I saw the woman on the page was naked and out of her back grew wings!

CHAPTER 1

On our way home my father seemed somewhat preoccupied and passed off my questions, without or it seemed to me, a satisfactory or considered answer. This led me to ponder on the strange family we had just met. What was an affliction?

“Dad please tell me what an affliction is.”

“It’s something unpleasant that people have to bear,” he replied. “Now I want to think about a problem I have at work, so please don’t talk for a while”.

We climbed the stony track. When we reached the top and turned right my father looked round and seemed to be trying to find landmarks.

“See the horse chestnut tree with the candles,” he pointed. I nodded.

“We’ll come back in the autumn for conkers,” he promised.

Later in the week I overheard a conversation between my parents.

“I said I’d take some tools down to Stubbs

Wood. The chap seemed to have little in the way of anything modern. Did I tell you they have no electricity?"

I pricked up my ears.

"Can I come with you?" I asked.

"Not this time," he replied. "I'm going after your bedtime."

"How do they see at night without electricity?" I asked.

"Oil lamps dear, and candles," he told me.

"Remember Aunt Katie and Uncle Jim in Cumberland?" My mother turned to me, "They haven't got electricity either." We visited these relations annually and of course I remembered their oil lamps, they had an unusual smell but cast warm, moving shadows on the walls.

The following morning I asked my mother if Dad had gone to Stubbs wood.

"Oh yes dear, that egg you are eating for your breakfast came from there."

"Did he find out what the affliction was? The man showed us a book with a lady who had wings. She was being drowned as a witch," I informed her eagerly.

"Enough of your questions, you'll be late for school. The book would have been a fairy tale."

"I wonder where William goes to school," I said.

“Apparently he is taught at home,” she replied.

That situation seemed great to me. No bullies to contend with in the playground!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

That autumn when conker fights started in the playground I reminded my father of his promise to take me to Stubbs Wood. I knew he had been there, usually going in an evening when I was in bed. He seemed to help Jim Hewiitt with his wagon.

Dad seemed reluctant when I asked, and that week both he and my mother seemed to have conversations that ended abruptly when I appeared. However, the next Sunday dawned sunny and bright and there seemed no reason not to head for Stubbs Wood.

“Don’t be asking questions Kathie, not at all,” my father sounded quite adamant.

“Did you find out what the affliction is?” I asked, “and why the little girl died?”

“You are too young to understand dear, and you may be tempted to tell your friends, and that would never do,” he replied.

“I always get told I’m too young,” I replied resentfully. “When will I be old enough?”

We reached the horse chestnut tree with its proud branches heavily laden with conkers.

Many lay on the ground and half hidden in the fallen damp, golden autumn leaves. I excitedly crammed my pockets until they would hold no more.

“We will plant one in the pot and then you can watch it grow,” my father told me.

From behind us came the sound of a horse and cart. We turned to see Jim Hewitt, behind him amongst several sheep we saw the solemn face of William who was holding tight onto the carts sides. Both father and son had sacking shawls round their shoulders. It came to me, fleetingly, that it was like a scene from the bible picture book I had at home.

Drawing his cart to a halt Jim hailed my father with pleasure.

“Nice to see you Gilbert. Would the little lass like to ride beside me down to the house? We’ll see if William’s mam has a biscuit.” I shyly agreed. My father lifted me up beside him. William shrank back amongst the sheep.

He is shy of me ’cos I’m a girl, I thought.

As we drew up outside the house, my father, who had walked briskly beside us, lifted me down. He greeted Mary Hewitt, who at the sound of the dog’s usual welcome, had come out to see who had arrived.

“How nice to see you again,” she smiled as she spoke and taking my hand she led me

through the porch into the warmth of the kitchen.

Jim and William did not follow us. Pulling a chair closer to the fire she bade my father sit down.

"It's certainly made life a lot easier for Jim since you brought him these tools," she told my father, all the while busying herself with the kettle and tea making preparations.

"We have been glad of the eggs," my father smilingly replied.

"There'll be a nice leg of lamb next week," and she put her finger to her lips as if to say keep it secret!

"Why doesn't William come in?" I asked.

"Kathie, I told you not to ask questions," Dad sounded cross.

"William is shy," she patted my head, whilst exchanging glances with my dad.

I'll be trouble on the way home, I thought, for asking questions.

CHAPTER 2

Living next door to us was a family of boys. The middle one was named Clive and he was a bully. He would wait for me in shop doorways on my way home from school, and jump out, thumping me firmly for good measure. I was so terrified of him that eventually my father had a word with his father. For a time my homecoming was without incident.

In the 1940s when I went to school, if you were bullied you usually had to keep quiet or you'd be considered soft. However Clive Smith had plans for me after, "I told on him," so he said one day, when he caught me skipping, all unaware, along the road, by the air raid shelters.

Sometimes we had air raid warnings and the siren would go off and we would go in crocodile from school with our gas masks. They were only practice runs. In this part of East Lancashire we escaped the raids which decimated Liverpool and Manchester; conse-

quently evacuees were sent to our area for safety, and one of them I had made my friend. Janet, from Liverpool, who was housed in a hostel with her mother. She was due to come to our home to tea that day. My thoughts were all of her when, from the opening that led to the air raid shelters, Clive Smith emerged. I stopped frozen with shock as he bent his head, his sallow, mean face on a level with mine. I turned to run but he gripped my arm and pushed me into the entrance to the shelter. Twisting my arm up by my back he said, "Where do you and your dad go on a Sunday morning?"

"Just a walk," I said. "Let me go or my brother will get you."

My brother was eight years older.

"Your dad made my pa give me the belt so now I'll punish you."

I screamed as my arm was twisted further up my back.

"Where do you go?" he again asked.

"Stubbs Wood," I gasped.

"What is at Stubbs Wood?" he asked, giving my arm another twist.

"Your mam told my mam she gets eggs from a country friend, is that in Stubbs Wood?"

I was crying by this time, terrified I wouldn't be able to escape him.

“Yes, yes,” I said, “please let me go.”

“I’m going to tell the police,” he said, “Don’t you know it’s wartime and we have rations. If you buy things off the ration it’s called the black market and you get sent to prison.” He pushed me against the wall. “Now stop your blubbering and tell me where Stubbs Wood is or I’ll tell the police.”

“I don’t know, my Dad takes me,” I whimpered.

“Are you going on Sunday?” he asked.

“We may be.”

“Well, if I let you go now you have to promise not to tell your parents I’ve spoken to you or I will tell the police about the eggs, and your dad will be sent to prison.”

Of course, as an innocent seven-year-old I believed him and gratefully promised in order to secure my release.

“Make sure you go to Stubbs Wood on Sunday – I’ll be following you,” he said, pushing me onto the pavement.

“Kathie, Kathie, where have you been?” It was my friend Janet, “Your mum is very worried,” running towards me.

“I fell and hurt my arm,” I said.

When we reached my house I dissolved in tears in my mother’s arms.

“What is it dearie,” she held me tightly.

“Has that Clive Smith been bothering you again?”

“Oh no, oh no, I just fell, I was climbing on the wall,” I assured her.

That night I had a serious nightmare, my screams bringing my mother rushing to my bedroom.

“What has been troubling you,” she kept asking.

I dare not tell.

CHAPTER 3

“Are you going to see William on Sunday?” I asked my father the next day.

“I may have to do a job in the engine room when the looms aren’t running,” he replied.

I felt sick, if we didn’t go to Stubbs Wood Clive Smith would tell the police and my dad would be sent to prison. I was only seven and things at that age appear black and white. I could only wonder what we would do if my dad was sent to prison. I knew he received wages that he gave to my mother to buy us food. We would starve if he went to prison. I began to cry at the thought.

“Now, now don’t cry.” My father of course did not know the real reason for my tears. Suddenly cunning entered my mind, I’m sure it was the first time. What is the old saying, “Needs must when the Devil drives”? He certainly came to me as a seven-year-old.

“William is going to show me a baby lamb,” I said, “please can we go?”

“Well, I suppose we can go in the morning

and I can do my job in the afternoon," he replied. Relief overwhelmed me.

"You and William are becoming good friends," he smiled and patted my head.

Clive Smith was waiting for me on my way home on Friday. Janet was with me, which gave me some false bravado.

"Don't walk near us Clive Smith," I said, "Or I will tell my Dad."

"Oh, you will tell your dad will you? I don't think so. I think I will tell someone about your dad, haven't forgotten our little chat the other day?"

"What is he talking about?" asked Janet.

Clive leered, eerily. For a 9- or 10-year-old he had an unpleasant mind. Psychologists would no doubt blame him being the middle one of a large family, perhaps left out of things, who knows?

"Ask her what her dad gets from Stubbs Wood," he replied.

Janet looked bewildered.

"Take no notice of him," I said taking her arm.

"I'll be watching you all day Sunday," he called as he ran off.

I dissolved into tears, fumbling in my pocket for my handkerchief.

'You must tell your mam if he's making you

cry," Janet put her arm round me. "What did he mean about Sunday?"

"He's going to follow us to Stubbs Wood," I replied.

"Well tell your dad, he'll see him," she said.

"I can't, please Janet, don't tell anyone. After Sunday he'll leave me alone," I said hopefully.

Janet looked worried when she left me. She was nearly nine and coming from Liverpool, more streetwise than me.

Unbeknown to me Janet told her mother who paid us a visit that night after I had gone to bed.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On Sunday morning I awoke early to the sound of birdsong. I jumped out of bed, pulled back my curtains and then heard in the distance the familiar chuff, chuff, chuff and piercing whistle of one of the steam trains that passed behind our house several times each day, the sound came nearer, then rose in intensity as the train passed. Sometimes the other children and I would put coins on the line before the train passed. Picking up the squashed and flattened metal with glee. Woe betide us if our parents saw us on the embankment.

As the noise of the train diminished I suddenly remembered with dread that this was Sunday. We were going to Stubbs Wood and Clive Smith was going to follow us.

I was very subdued as I ate my breakfast and Mum asked me why I was quiet. Looking over my head at my dad she said, "Well you have a lovely day for your walk. Make sure you come back in one piece Kathie, don't be falling again.

My brother Brian appeared in the doorway, much to my surprise. He exchanged what I now know to have been a conspiratorial look with my father.

I kissed my mother, and went in to say goodbye to my sister.

"Tell me all about your walk when you come back. I wished I could come with you. I'd like to see the book they showed you," she said wistfully.

"I'll ask to see it again," I said, momentarily looking forward to the visit, then remembering about Clive Smith a cloud must have passed over my face.

"What is the matter dear?" she asked.

"Oh nothing," I kissed her cheek and ran through the kitchen, pausing to kiss my oldest sister who was sitting at the table writing a

letter to her husband who was serving with the RAF in India.

I liked Sundays when everyone was at home.

Dad took my hand and as we passed along the street I glanced fearfully behind me and saw, to my horror, Clive Smith kicking a stone around in the gutter.

CHAPTER 4

My fear of Clive Smith was forgotten for a short while as we walked through the wood. The air was alive with scents and sounds which, to this day, when walking in the country, evoke memories of my Sunday mornings with my father. Pheasants ran in front of us, their short legs propelling them at an alarming rate and in a distinctly amusing manner, why don't they fly off, I thought.

We reached the now more transparent green dome of trees at the entrance to the track through Stubbs Wood. I glanced behind me and to my utmost surprise my brother Brian was catching us up.

"I thought I'd have some fresh air for a change," he told my father, "and do you know who I came upon? Clive Smith, just up the track there," he said.

"Oh no – he'll tell the police we have black market eggs," I cried fearfully.

"What is all this?" My father bent down towards me and the story came tumbling out.

“Clive Smith won’t be troubling you again dear. Don’t be afraid. Brian has warned him off. The police won’t put me in prison over a few eggs I promise,” he was reassuring but I still felt apprehensive.

The Hewitts were delighted to meet Brian. We sat round the large fireplace like old friends, the light from the oil lamps casting shadows as it swung, very gently, over the table which was covered with an assortment of home baking.

“Please show Brian the book,” I begged Mary.

“Kathie, do not be so pushy,” my father told me.

“The lassie is all right, she’s seen the book, we’ll show it to your brother dear.”

The book was old and dog-eared. It was several months since we had seen it that first visit. I looked over Mary’s shoulder as she showed my brother.

“This is Jim’s ancestor, Katherine Hewitt, she was hanged as a witch in 1612. Same time as the Catholic Alice Nutter.”

My father looked again.

“Those were bad times,” he said. “The fact that King James believed in witchcraft would make the common uneducated people believe it too. Those trials were a fiasco, one of the

biggest miscarriages of justice ever seen in this land."

"What was wrong with her back?" My brother asked.

There was a silence, a piece of wood fell onto the hearth, briefly flaring light into the dim room.

"She had the affliction. They picked on her because she had a physical deformity. She had wings."

"Wings?" asked my brother, "Flying wings?"

"No, just flesh that looked like wings. The affliction passed several generations, then my little baby had them, passed on from Jim," she broke down in tears.

There was a terrible silence, then Mary said, "They tried to operate on her and she died. They did it against my will. There was nothing else wrong with her."

William put his hands to his face.

"What will happen to me?" his voice was raised in anguish.

"Why, why?" I whispered.

He turned round, taking off his sacking shawl we saw a protuberance thrusting through his clothes, grey and scaly, like wings.

William was crying and his mother went up put her arm round him.

"I think we should leave now, Mary," my father said.

I remember walking back up the track and my father saying to me.

"You must promise not to tell anyone do you hear?"

"What if Clive Smith twists my arm up behind my back again?" I asked fearfully.

"He did what?" My father was so angry.

"I don't think he'll trouble you after today," Brian said.

"I think I'll be contacting the police," said my father in anger.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I saw the hunchback, I saw the hunchback," Clive Smith followed me home the next day.

"I won't touch you but I can talk to you," he continued smirking.

My heart sank, looking back on my childhood he was certainly the worst part of it. I carried with me the secret of the wings and now Clive was saying he'd seen a hunchback. Who had he seen? William or his father? This family, who had become our friends, who had shared their agony with us, were now exposed to the venom of Clive Smith. A cruel boy. If he made William his

victim what might happen? Even to my young mind this was bad news. Children can be so cruel, cruelty was Clive Smith's trademark. From the first day I had seen him plucking the wings off a butterfly, I had feared him.

"I'm going to take a gang down to Stubbs Wood on Saturday," he said, "we'll see why the hunchback hides away."

"He's not a hunchback," I felt I had to shout.

"What is he then?" the boy came nearer.

I remember what my father had said, it was a secret I had to keep. I started to run, I ran and ran, down the hill, over the railway bridge, along the main road. My chest was hurting, my breath coming in sharp, painful gasps. His feet sounded behind me, catching up.

A voice called, Kathie, Kathie," it was Janet's mother pushing her baby in his pram. I fell against her, nearly in a faint and she held me to her.

"Clive Smith," I gasped.

She turned round, Clive Smith had stopped running, and like the bullying coward he was, hesitated, then swung round to run in the opposite direction.

"I'll tell your father," Janet's mother shouted to his retreating back.

Later that night my father and my brother

questioned me about Clive Smith's threats.

"These people have to be protected," my father told Brian.

"What can we do?"

"I know," said my brother. "Remember the authorities blocked off those roads near Rimington to hide the ammunition?"

"Yes," answered my dad, questioningly.

"If we go on Friday evening and early Saturday we can block off the entrance to Stubbs Farm and they will never find it."

So that is what they did. I went and helped Mary and Jim to drag the branches Dad and Brian cut down, over the entrance to the farm track. The men worked long and hard and at last the job was finished.

"How will they get out?" I asked, worried that they were trapped.

"They don't need to get out, they have plenty of food. Also Brian was shown a secret passage from the house. They do have a priest hole and hundreds of years after its creation it's going to be used again." And it was.

BOOK 1

The Icarus Legacy

17th Century

The hunched black crow, friend to the ferry man of the Styx, stood sentinel on the gnarled branch of an ancient oak. For hours now it had been patiently watching the futile efforts of a sheep in Score Clough gully a short distance from the base of the tree. The crow watched and waited. The sheep, now on its back was trapped and unable to rise, totally vulnerable to what was inevitable.

Also observing the despairing animal were a pair of magpies, on another tree, sitting a little apart, their gaze momentarily diverted by circling crows arriving, as if summoned by magic, to take part in the events which would take place upon the sheep's passing.

James Device crawled through the undergrowth to watch the scene. He knew there was no point in scaring the birds away. He couldn't stop all day, nor move the sheep, he gave a passing thought to the cruelty of

nature. A fox would finish off the carcase that night. He hoped the crow hadn't been at the rabbits in his snares.

Leaving the disturbing scene and the quarrelling birds he bent low, running up the gully, ahead of him clouds and mist were hanging low over the vast bulk of Pendle Hill.

Yes, a plump rabbit was in the snare and with expert fingers he took possession of the animal, pushing it into a bag hanging around his neck, hidden in the folds of his jerkin.

He broke cover and crossing a field he hurried towards another track, through Aitken Wood, over Brown Hill, and down into the valley of Roughlee. He jumped over stepping stones over Whiteclough water which swirled around his feet and cut through Hollin Wood. He passed several crude dwellings, exciting barking from chained dogs. Still he went on, another mile or so until, his heart lighter he saw the outline of a stone house, smoke curling from the chimney which was somehow out of symmetry with the rest of the building. This was his home, Malkin Tower.

A child ran out to meet him and took hold of his hand chattering eagerly, as she pulled him towards the house.

An old woman, known locally as Demdike, her grey hair contained by a shawl, leaning on

a stick, hobbled through the open doorway, she called shrilly, "Jamie, do we eat well this day?"

"Yes, Grandmother, rabbit pie!"

"You are a good lad, Jamie," she chuckled, leaning heavily against him they entered the house. The door, hanging on only one hinge closed behind them.

CHAPTER 1

“Katherine, finish the milking and come inside,” a plump rosycheeked woman, clad in grey homespun, peered round the doorway of the byre.

The pretty dark-haired girl, to whom she was speaking, was seated on a small stool, her head pressed against the cow she was presently milking, enjoying the warmth and comfort of the animal.

“Won’t be long Mother.”

Five minutes later, adjusting her shawl round her shoulders, Katherine went into the living-room of the house. Her mother was now turning a spit over the blazing fire in the wide stone fireplace.

Outside, her father Robert Hartley struggled with a wheel he was fixing to a cart. When he had successfully finished, he also entered the house.

“Has your mother told you I need you to come to the market at Colne with me?” he asked Katherine.

"She was just telling me Father. I'll get my cloak at once," she moved into the corner of the room.

"See that she keeps away from that James Device," her mother told him.

"I can hear you Mother. James and I are friends, he is kind to animals, and kind to me. He doesn't mind my ugly back," her daughter looked up indignantly.

"Hold your tongue girl and remember who you are talking to," her mother replied.

"Now Nancy don't be too hard on the girl. I see no harm in James Device," her husband sought to placate her.

"No harm – one of the begging Demdike brood?" she countered.

In the gathering light of rush and tallow candles Nancy's face took on a spiteful leer. "They are all feckless and lazy, living by begging. Their mother aint no better than she should be since her husband died."

"Have some compassion for the widow, what would you do without me to provide for you?" her husband replied.

The woman had the grace to keep quiet following this remark.

Helping his daughter into the cart they began their journey to Colne.

They passed along by fields covered in early

dew which lay upon spiders webs like drops of crystal. The sun shone through scudding clouds, here one minute, gone the next.

"James Device has been farmed out since he was six or seven to do menial tasks for his keep, he is a sad person," Katherine told her father.

"I know that my dear, but he would not make a good husband, he has no example to follow," her father replied.

"What example have I got?" she asked,

"My mother nags you from morn to dusk."

"She cooks well and cares for us," he rebuked her.

"I never get a kind word, its always, 'you won't get a husband with your back',"

"You have a pretty face Katherine. Most men look no further," her father tried to comfort her.

"If I have children I hope they don't have this affliction, why have I Father?"

"Sadly it is in my family as your mother is so fond of telling me. I believe my grandmother suffered from what we called 'the curse', but she died when I was little, as I never remember seeing her. She had five children and my father said she was kind."

"Maybe my children would be normal?" she asked.

"It do seem to miss generations dear, you can hope," he said.

"Perhaps if I don't get married the curse will die out with me," she said sadly.

"We none of us know, and I have brothers and sisters who will carry it, like some have Roman noses in this area, and the Romans have been gone a thousand years."

He flipped lightly over the horse with his whip as they trotted along. Sometimes passing a pedlar with his pack on his back, giving a wave and the time of day.

Then a woman leading a cow and calf and a girl driving two geese.

As they drew nearer to the town it became busier. Stalls were set up and pedlars touted their wares calling out with shrill voices.

Driving down the rutted road a coach passed them, a receding jangle of harness and hooves, nearly forcing them into the crowd, it stopped at the 'Hole in the Wall' and an ostler ran out to take the horses reins.

Katherine, looking back, saw a florid dark-haired man alight, he had a squat large-bellied figure and an imperious manner.

"That man you are watching, he be a judge, come to sentence some poor fellow no doubt, for apeing his betters, so they say. It's poor Jim Bannister in Court, he had some land in

his family and he lost his deeds, or had them stolen, and now Sellar from White Moor is claiming it. No justice for the poor Katherine, remember that," he shook his head sadly.

Robert drove his cart to a pre-arranged place, people called out to him jovially and he responded. Katherine held her shawl tightly around her. She hated these trips to the market, why can't Mother come sometimes, she thought.

"I'll take these eggs to old Tom, he ordered them, then I have some knives to be sharpened. You get the pork from Benjamin Hewitt, he owes us a leg, don't take any nonsense. Then get your mother's hair pins," with this last remark Robert walked off.

Katherine had no choice other than to pick her way through the dirt and spills from the numerous stalls, old vegetables, paper, rubbish. At the side of a stall a dog relieved himself and she stepped quickly to one side.

A child swept up horse droppings, no doubt to take home for the garden.

She reached the stall where she was to pick up the pork. Benjamin peered at her, he had a pinched and querulous face.

"Oh! It's you Katherine, what do you want?"

“My father said you have a leg of pork for us.” she replied.

“I’d forgotten, I may have it, or I may not,” he looked peevishly at her, squinting short-sightedly.

Patiently Katherine waited, she knew the routine, he would grumble all the time but would eventually find it.

Passing over the pork Benjamin held onto Katherine’s fingers too long and she cringed, pulling her hand away. As she hurried back towards the stall from which she must buy the pins, she reflected how much she disliked that man.

At last, her duties over she started to make her way back to the cart. Thinking as she went along that she hoped her father had not joined his friends in the inn, he sometimes had too much ale. She could hardly blame him, but her mother would certainly blame her if her father was drunk. Also she was always frightened in the cart on these occasions.

Suddenly she heard a chanting she knew from old, “hunchy back, hunchy back, have a tack”, and three or four urchins came around her.

“Show us yer ’unchy back then”, one, more unprepossessing than the others, caught hold of her dress.

“Leave me be,” she cried and clung on to her parcels.

“You heard her, leave her be,” a youth about her age, bigger than the urchins and with a stave in his hand pushed them aside, they turned and ran.

“Oh Jamie, thank you,” she wept gratefully.

“I’m glad I was ’ere Katherine,” he said, and she happily surrendered her load.

“I saw your cart, I’ll stay with you ’til your Dad comes. That is if you want me to,” he asked ever anxious.

“Oh yes, Jamie, please.”

It was some time before her father came, and they talked of this and that, skating over the problem she had encountered with the urchins.

CHAPTER 2

James Device watched as Katherine was driven away from the market. He looked round for his sister Alison, she was supposed to have met him by the pie-stall. She had a licence to beg and would share her coins with him.

There she was, waving to him. A slightly built, fair-haired, pretty girl came through the crowd.

"Jamie, I've been looking all over for you," she said as she tucked her arm in his and the two walked towards the pie-stall. Jamie's mouth began to water at the tantalising smells.

"Katherine Hartley was being hounded by kids and I had to chase 'em away. They were calling 'er 'hunchy back'. I felt sorry for her," he explained.

"It's so sad she has this deformed back, but you can't tell until she turns round. She has a pretty face," his sister replied.

The brother and sister bought their pies, eating them straight from the vendor, the

juices trickling down their chins. Jamie wiped his mouth with the back of his sleeve.

"Ee, they are good, can tha afford another Alison?" he pleaded.

"Granma'll kill me if I don't take summat back, oh, go on, I'll get thi' another and 'ope to get some more money this aft," she told him and they both returned to the pie-stall. These pies were indeed a great treat.

Later Alison took up her position by the inn, hoping that, being warmed and cheered by the ale, the customers would be generous to her.

"Spare a coin mister," she spoke to an elderly man whose face was furrowed and weather-beaten, he turned a face full of fire upon her.

"Away with you, you should be working for your keep."

"No-one wants me sir, no-one will employ me," she replied.

"Why is that?" he demanded.

"I'll tell you why," he was joined by a rotund, busy looking little man with baby-soft cheeks and a shining pink scalp, dressed in a frock coat, his thin black-stockinged legs seemed as if they could hardly hold him up.

"She's one of the Demdike brood from Malkin Tower. There isn't a days work in any of them," he looked derisively at Alison who

shrank back before the vicious onslaught.

"Come Matthew, you are being uncharitable," another man, tall and distinguished, his iron-grey hair hanging straight from under a pointed black hat, who cast a coin in Alison's direction, she picked it up and quickly ran away.

"Nicholas, you are too soft," the smaller man turned towards the other.

"Matthew, I've never had to beg for my living, nor have you, we can't judge." Nicholas Bannister was a local JP known for his charity. The very opposite of Matthew Lightowler who saw it as his duty to harass the poor.

The first man joined the two as they walked to the back of the inn where his horse was tethered. Clad in homespun and breeches he was a local tenant of the Assheton family, and a Constable, Henry Hargreaves. He mounted a horse being held by an ostler and the other two walked towards their carriages. The days business completed they journeyed home, smug in the knowledge of the lavish dinner which awaited them each evening.

Alison ran homeward, jumping over streams, pushing through wooded coppices, she hoped to catch Jamie up. They both used the same route and sure enough as she breasted the hill of Reed Lane, she saw him in

the distance. Although by this time she was panting and short of breath she increased her speed.

Jamie paused by the stream at the bottom of the hill down which Alison now ran. She stumbled to a halt at his side. He smiled, his gentle face lit up as she joined him, "See, there's fish in the shallows. Quiet now and we'll eat well by twilight, Grandmother will 'ave no cause to beat me this day."

The two crouched by the stream and Jamie carefully stretched full length on the grass. Very gradually he slid his hand into the water and left it there. They both held their breath. At their backs the sun was sinking, behind Pendle Hill, the sky pink, mingling into the blue above them. Close by a thrush sang and the wind stirred the grass bringing with it the scent of bluebells from the nearby wood.

"Got it," there was a splash and Jamie removed a large fish from the water, it flapped in terror, he slapped it quickly on a stone 'til it was lifeless.

"Shall we get another?" his sister asked him.

"Aye, I'll try. Wait a minute 'til the water settles again."

Eventually, after several attempts, Jamie caught another fish. "Find some rat leaves Alison and we'll wrap them up."

Alison followed the path of the stream. Marsh marigolds grew in profusion but their leaves were too small. Foxgloves, just starting to follow had larger leaves but her grandmother had chastised her before for using them. "If you get the juice of foxgloves into yours hands it will make your heart quicken," she had said, "foxglove juice is good for the lazy heart and dropsy." Alison wondered if she should take some of the leaves, then thought again, "There are lots of foxgloves nearer Malkin Tower."

She passed wild pansies peeping shyly through the undergrowth. Violets too released their scent from the bank as she crouched down nearer the water to reach out for the large leaves of the butterbur, known locally as rat leaves. Having collected enough in which to wrap the fish she returned towards the place where Jamie was gathering his catch together.

"I saw some coltsfoot plants on the bank, I must tell grandmother when they are flowering next year, she makes them into cough medicine," she told Jamie.

"We'll take some leaves now," he said, "She'll use them as well and they'll be ready for next winter. Mistress Baldwin was asking for some cough medicine last week."

At last, leaves collected, coins rattling in her

pocket Alison ran home beside Jamie. They kept to the shelter of the trees, hiding when a horseman rode by for fear of being accosted and their fish taken from them. This had happened in the past.

They toiled up Slipper Hill, then crossing another rutted track they saw in the distance a light flickering. "See, Jamie, Mother has left a lantern burning for us,". Alison ran across the field towards a stone building which nestled in the lee of the hill. This was Malkin Tower, their home. Obviously part of it was in ruins, but the remainder had small mulioned windows, a porch clung precariously to the rest of the house and a rickety door stood open. Smoke rose from a tall chimney.

As they approached the house a large black dog rushed towards them barking joyously and the two of them patted and petted her.

"What kept you then?" a woman emerged from the house, she was unusual in appearance having one eye higher than the other, due to an accident in a nearby coal-pit.*

"We stopped to catch fish, Mother," Jamie replied, handing her the leaf-wrapped parcel, which she gratefully accepted.

They followed their mother into a smoky

*A cry of Innocence

room. Just discernible in a chair by the fire was another older woman who turned towards them and in a querulous voice asked if Alison had got any money.

"Yes Grandmother, Nicholas Bannister threw me a shilling after Hargreaves cursed me," replied Alison.

"I'll pray for him still and loud, a curse on him not on us. What harm do we do him?" her grandmother replied.

"Come Mother, enough of your cursing. Jamie has brought us fish for our meal," her daughter replied, then turning towards the fire she pushed with her foot at a small child who lay on a sheepskin playing with a kitten, "Jennet, up you get and fetch the chicory jar, we'll drink well tonight," the child ran to a cupboard and rummaging there found a pot full of chicory powder which she handed to her mother. Throwing another log on the fire the woman hung a roasting pan from an iron rail and placed the fishes on this.

The family settled down to await their supper and Elizabeth Device, their mother, spooned teaspoons of ground chicory into tankards of hot water for Jamie and Alison, adding honey for sweetening. The two drank gratefully whilst telling of the events at Colne market.

CHAPTER 3

Several months later Katherine was happily milking in the barn. She enjoyed this chore, the warmth of the cows, the peace of her lonely existence. Whenever she could escape from her mother's demands she could be found with the cows, hens, sheep, in the pasture or in the barn.

Suddenly she heard a loud crashing noise followed by a scream from her mother, the dog was also barking furiously. Pushing her stool back she got to her feet. Her back ached with the position she had kept for the previous twenty minutes whilst she milked and she staggered slightly and leaned against the doorway.

"Katherine, Katherine, where are you?" her mother was now shouting and the girl hurried towards the house. Rounding the corner she immediately saw the upturned cart and her father pinned underneath by a wheel.

"Help me lift it," her mother cried, "I can't, I can't," Katherine cried as she tried to bend

down, her deformity causing great pain as she tried.

“Get help then, go to Roughlee, ask Mistress Nutter to send a man.”

Katherine hurried off. It was at least a quarter of a mile to the hamlet of Roughlee. On her way she heard the wheels of a cart on the rutted track and turning she saw William Boothman, a neighbour at Roughlee and frantically waved at him. Pulling his horses to a halt he was quickly made aware of the situation and helping Katherine into the cart they turned and in no time he was at the farm. A strong man he soon had the cart wheel lifted and helped to lift Robert from under it. He was unconscious and William, feeling his pulse said “I dare not move him further, I will ride for help, keep him warm.”

Katherine’s mother was hysterical and vented her spite on her daughter.

“Who will do the heavy work on the farm now, you are so useless,” she rounded on the shrinking girl who, unusually for her found the spirit to react.

“You will have to do more, you never dirty your hands,” she replied.

Seizing a broom the woman rushed at the girl, beating her, venting her spite.

“What’s going on ’ere?” the youth Jamie

Device came round the side of the house. The woman turned from beating her daughter to raising the broom to the youth who quickly took the instrument from her and casting it to one side he walked over to the unconscious man. "My grandmother has potions to help him, come with me Katherine, your mother needs something to calm her too."

Her mother, still hysterical began screaming at the youth again.

"Don't go with him girl, we want no witch's brews here," but Katherine and James were already out of earshot.

The sound of horses caused her to turn in relief and Dick Nutter of Roughlee and his wife cantered into the yard.

"Mistress Hartley calm down." The other woman alighted from her horse and gently led the hysterical wife into her home and encouraged her to sit down. Further help was heard arriving and eventually Robert was lifted onto a door which had been removed from its hinges and he was gently carried inside the room.

Mistress Nutter encouraged Robert's wife to drink from a flask she carried.

"This is better than anything from the Demdike," she said gratefully.

"I am sorry to disappoint you Mistress

Hartley but this potion is from Malkin Tower, do not underestimate the Demdike's abilities as a herbalist. I, myself have learned from her," Alice Nutter replied.

Robert was now groaning loudly.

"I think he is recovering consciousness," Dick said. "This is a good sign. The physician has been sent for so we can only wait."

Katherine and Jamie did not return from Malkin Tower that day, she wished to wait for news of her father's health. She was nervous of her mother's reaction.

The following day a rider approached as Katherine and Alison were feeding hens, with Jamie.

Elizabeth Device, hands on hips waited. The man took off his hat. "I am sent by Robert Hartley to ask his daughter to return with me," he said.

"Oh, Henry Mitton, we will only let Katherine return if she is to be well treated, Jamie here saved her from a beating, her mother was hysterical," the woman stood her ground.

Katherine and Alison came forward and Katherine asked for news of her father's injuries.

"The physician has reported several ribs broken and damage to his spine. It would

appear that your father will be an invalid for some time," he told her.

"I had better return home," Katherine was reluctant to go and Jamie took her hand.

"I will watch out for you." he promised.

Katherine tried to climb up behind Henry Mitton, a difficult task for someone with her deformity, she winced in pain and fell backwards.

"I will have to walk sir," she reluctantly admitted.

"We will come with you." cried Alison and Jamie in unison.

CHAPTER 4

Katherine's homecoming had passed amicably. The village women had helped the family and the men had taken over the heavy work. Robert Hartley tried to run his smallholding from his bed and was frustrated and helpless, he watched his wife bully Katherine with resentment.

"The lassie has to have rest woman, have you no pity for her handicap?" he asked one day when he could keep quiet no longer.

"Whose fault is it she is handicapped? That is what I got for marrying you. I would have had healthy sons by now to run this farm," she replied.

"I wish you had married someone else, you came to this farm with nothing and don't forget it. Katherine will inherit, I will make a will," he told her in anger.

Her temper blazing she rushed at him, and tripping, she fell onto his bed, the hot water from the pan she had been holding splashed out over the head and shoulders of the man

and he screamed in pain. Katherine stood back in terror at the scene.

Her mother started to cry, "It was an accident, an accident," she sobbed.

The sounds brought others into the home, one woman tried to wipe Robert's face but he screamed in agony.

Suddenly his body trembled, as in a fit, foam escaped his mouth, then his body slumped.

The physician who came later gave his opinion that the shock of the scolding, on top of his recent accident had caused a massive cerebral haemorrhage. Although Katherine and her mother nursed him carefully through the night they knew he was slipping away and they were by his side when he died.

The funeral, a few days later, was attended by many friends and neighbours. Robert Hartley had been a well respected man. A crowd followed the cart containing the body through the village of Roughlee where people stood in respect as they passed by towards Newchurch in Pendle where he was interred.

Mistress Nutter and her husband Dick opened up their home for refreshments for these who had paid their respects.

Katherine was overcome with grief. Her father had loved her. He had stood between her and her mother's abuse, all her life. She

looked round the room and her attention was caught by her mother being in a deep conversation with Ben Hewitt, the butcher from Colne. As she watched, her mother looked up and caught her eye, and smiled. For an incredulous moment Katherine couldn't believe her eyes, then thinking, Mother never smiles at me, she looked enquiringly at her mother and Ben Hewitt approached.

"Katherine, come down here. Mr Hewitt has a proposition to put to us. We cannot run the farm now your father has died," her mother smiled again.

There was a silence in the room, as many folk had heard the remarks.

Mistress Nutter came forward. "Please don't make any hasty decisions for yourself or Katherine, Mistress Hartley, local people will help you on the farm all they can."

"Thank you for your concern Mistress. I will remember what you have said, I thank you again for your hospitality today but Katherine and I must return home. Benjamin will give us a lift in his cart."

As Katherine and her mother climbed up onto the cart Katherine shuddered as Ben allowed his hands to squeeze her thighs as he helped her up. She wondered what he was going to offer them, with fear.

Katherine was quiet on the journey home, she saw Jamie and Alison holding their little sister Jennet by the hand as they came round a corner and waved, they waved back, causing Katherine's mother to turn and remonstrate with her.

"They are my only friends, I shall wave at them when I want to," she retorted.

"You won't want no friends like the Demdike brood when you are with me," Ben Hewitt turned his head, his small eye gleaming, he licked saliva on his lips and Katherine felt sick.

"I am not going anywhere with you," she replied indignantly.

"We shall see," he said and she saw him give her mother a poke in the ribs, the widow smiled at him and Katherine thought "Surely Mother isn't going to get married again and my father not cold in his grave."

Arriving home, Ben again helped Katherine from the cart, holding her too long so that she visibly shuddered and pushed him away. He leered at her as he followed them into the house.

"This house is mine now, I'm the widow, and Ben here is going to buy it from me," her mother turned on Katherine before she had time to take off her bonnet and sit down.

"But Father's own father left it to him, it has been in the family for years. Father said it would pass to me and to my family". Katherine was distraught.

"Who has come asking you to marry them? You with the hunchy back?" her mother asked.

"You are cruel indeed Mother, I am only sixteen, I will meet somebody who will love me for myself, Father told me his grandmother had five children and she had the deformity in her back."

"Oh yes, you will be married my girl. Ben here has offered for you and I've accepted. There is a home for us both with him in Colne," her mother stated grimly.

"No, no, I won't marry you. You are too old and horrible, I don't like you, I hate you," Katherine told Hewitt and glaring at her mother, "How could you do this to me?"

"I'll have something out of you yet, you've been a disgrace to me since you were born," her mother sneered at her.

"Come, come, you are surprising me woman, your daughter is a pretty girl and has worked hard for you. Robert always spoke well of her. Come girl, give me a chance to be good to you or its a licence to beg you'll be getting like the Device girl." He put his hand on Katherine's arm, but she shrugged away from

him. She moved quickly to the door and was through it before they could stop her.

Katherine didn't stop running until she reached Malkin Tower, the hens clucked, the geese honked, the dogs barked. At the noise the whole family came out to see what was disturbing them.

Katherine, as she fainted, said, "Mother has promised me to Benjamin Hewitt."

Several days later the constable of the area together with the church warden came banging on the door of Malkin Tower.

Elizabeth Device opened the door.

"We are told you have a young girl here, Katherine Hartley who is betrothed to Benjamin Hewitt. Hand her over or you will be charged with harbouring a minor." Katherine was led away in tears, placed in a cart, the journey back to her mother had begun.

CHAPTER 5

There was no-one to whom Katherine could turn. In 17th century England women had no lawful rights especially in the case of a sixteen-year-old girl, she was the property of the parents until she was married or came of age. Even then she could be totally dependent on an employer.

Katherine's mother made it clear to her that she would turn her out if she did not marry Ben Hewitt. Katherine, already handicapped, was unlikely to be offered an alternative. She and her mother moved to Colne, to the home of Ben Hewitt and the banns were read in the local church.

Mrs. Hartley was in her element organising the house which had received no woman's touch since the death of Ben's mother ten years previously. There was no shortage of meat and the kitchen was filled with the warm smells of cooking.

Katherine never spoke, and cringed when her mother addressed her, which was often

and intense. She railed at the girl for what she considered her ingratitude to Ben. Pointing out how good it was to live in the town amongst the hustle and bustle of life instead of being buried in the country.

Katherine was moved to remonstrate with her mother, "I liked the country. I miss my father, you have never grieved for him. He would never have asked me to marry anyone I hated."

"Well he's gone now and you are my property and soon you'll be Ben's. He has offered us both a home," she replied putting her face so close to her daughter she bumped her nose hard. Katherine started to cry, and said "When I'm married I will have more authority than you, had you thought of that?"

"Don't you threaten me girl, you don't know how to run a house but I do."

"Why don't you marry him then, he's more your age," Katherine replied bitterly.

Coming into the room at this point Ben heard the last remark, "I want to marry you my dear because of your pretty face. I like to hear you showing some spirit."

Turning to her mother he spoke curtly.

"When Katherine is my wife you will treat her accordingly or it will be you finding somewhere else to live."

Mrs. Hartley bristled, and giving Katherine a look of such hatred, left the room.

Ben approached Katherine who was sitting close to the fire. He took her chin in his hands and turned her to face him.

Leaning towards her he said, "Now my dear what about a little kiss for your promised husband?" His breath was rancid on her face and she shrank back in disgust.

"You won't be able to repulse me on our wedding night," he reacted furiously, "You'll respond to me or I will indeed give you a beating," and pushing her hard in the chest so that she almost fell off her chair, he left the room.

Katherine had only ever had few expectations, she had been satisfied with life on the farm. She remembered it now in her misery, the meadows with the sounds of bees and small animals. The smell of larkspur, marsh marigolds and meadowsweet, the scent of burning applewood from the fire, and she wept.

CHAPTER 6

Katherine was kept a virtual prisoner in the house. On market days only was she allowed out to help Ben on his stall. She hated handling the meat, cutting up liver, tripping over the pigs heads he left lying on the floor. Sometimes she would catch a glimpse of Jamie or Alison and they waved to her. If for any reason Ben left the stall Jamie would materialise from nowhere, or so she thought and she would wrap a piece of meat up quickly and pass it to him.

One afternoon, on his way back from supping ale in the Hole i'th Wall, Ben saw this happen. He watched in anger as Jamie melted back into the crowd. Ben was a man of some cunning, and in his own way was fond of Katherine and at this point, before the marriage took place he was trying to ingratiate himself with her. He held back, time enough to nip that little scene in the bud, he thought, when we're wed.

Katherine asked her mother why they

couldn't return to their old home for a day or two. "Ben has already let it to a couple from Gisburn," she told Katherine. "That was my home, I'll never be happy in Colne," the girl broke down in tears and in her heart determined she would return to the country one day. It was all she had to cling on to, hopes for an escape in the future. Jamie had brought her an apple from her own tree at home and pushed it toward her whilst Ben was occupied serving a customer, she knew the flavour as soon as she bit into the fruit, and for a moment or two she remembered her father passing the apples down to her each autumn.

The dreaded wedding day arrived, Katherine was made to wear a new dress her mother had made her. A posy of flowers was pushed into her hands and, with Ben on the one side and a friend of his on the other, her mother walking behind she was shepherded up the street towards the Parish Church of St. Bartholomew which stood sturdily on the hill as it had done for the last five hundred years at least. Its stone mellow in the morning sun. People stood about, they all knew each other. Few strangers passed this way. Sympathy towards the girl oozed out from a group of women standing by the gate, "Keep smiling girl, worse things can happen," one called,

engendering a look of malice from Ben Hewitt, "Although I can't say what."

Another woman, her shawl clasped tightly around her, stepped close to Katherine's mother, "You should be ashamed of yourself, selling your daughter to gain yourself a home," and nudging her with her shoulder she peered into the shocked woman's face and Nancy recognised the irregular features of Elizabeth Device. "We will be praying for you still and loud," another woman called.

Nancy hurried up the church pathway after the others. "What can they do to me," she thought, taking a deep breath. "I'm looking out for myself, and so do they". She lifted her head in a gesture of defiance as the group behind her cackled and catcalled.

At the church entrance Katherine struck back in a last attempt to escape, she looked wildly around. Jamie was there crouching behind a gravestone. He waved at her and she made as if to run to him but Ben and his friend held her in a vice-like grip and pushed her into the church. In the porch Ben said to Katherine, "I am losing patience with you my girl. You are in no situation to refuse me. You are insulting me with your attitude. I don't need to marry you girl, I could take you to my bed without the ceremony, and one more action

from you and I'll turn and take you home and do just that. I'll father children on you and turn you out, a fallen woman, believe me."

Katherine believed him, indeed she trembled at the threat. She knew her mother would not stand in his way. Slowly she walked towards the vicar.

Katherine never remembered going through the ceremony, she made her vows as she was told to do. Her heart heavy within her. She didn't understand fully the implications of Ben's threat to take her to bed, anyway. She had been brought up on a farm observing the mating of animals but somehow had never associated it with what was to happen to her, until he had made his threat in the church doorway. Then she knew. Feelings of nausea overtook her as she was hurried back through the town, to the house, where Nancy her mother presided over the wedding breakfast.

Suddenly, it seemed, there were people jesting and wishing her luck whilst they greedily ate and drank the free fare offered them. Ben took a flagon of ale to her, "See, wife, we will share a drink together," he thrust the drinking vessel towards her and she grudgingly drank, the bitterness of the ale caught at her throat and she coughed and spluttered. There were roars of laughter and

in the custom of the times Katherine was hoisted onto the shoulders of two men, Ben was also carried aloft, up the stairs and into the prepared bed and flickering tallow candles gave a dim light.

Women took off Katherine's clothes and she shrank as her back was exposed, there was a shocked silence in the room. This wasn't a hunchback. On Katherine's back were grey skin-like wings.

"Get out everyone," Ben stood by Katherine to protect her as the mutterings of the ignorant peasants came to them, hushed remarks such as, "Devil's mark", "witch" were heard. Ben pushed the shocked girl onto the bed, "Witch or no, you're my wife now, you're a woman aren't you?" He was tipsy from the ale, the exposure of her back had excited him and he fell upon her, rolling over on the bed, gripping her tightly, she screamed in terror, but he could not contain his lust.

CHAPTER 7

“You must get up, you can’t lie in bed day after day, Ben is losing his patience, he will beat you my girl. Oh, you are the stubborn one,” Nancy Hartley shook her daughter’s shoulders, “Listen to me, you are wasting away before our eyes, Ben is talking of throwing us both out and we have nowhere to go.”

At this last remark Katherine was jolted into life.

“Whose fault is that? You gave Ben control of our home, we could have stayed there. Now everyone knows my secret, Ben abuses me every night. My life is not worth living, all because of you Mother. My father will be turning in his grave at what you have brought me to.” She made the sign of the cross, then fell back on her mattress sobbing.

“I will bring a priest to you, he will help you overcome this lethargy,” her mother replied.

“You would place us in danger from the authorities by calling in a Roman Catholic

priest? Oh Mother you must be afraid of Ben. You have brought this on us, do what you will."

Nancy Hartley waited until Ben was at his market stall the next day then having made enquiries in the town, she returned with a hooded figure who, climbing after her up the stairs exclaimed in horror at the sight of Katherine's emaciated figure.

"Leave us," he motioned to the mother.

"Now Katherine, you know me, tell me of your life and why you no longer wish to live." He gently took her hand.

"My mother has only sent for you because she fears for herself, not me. She has brought this upon me by making me marry Ben Hewitt," Katherine whispered.

"Katherine, you will die if you do not eat. That is a sin against our Lord. Only by being strong can you overcome your situation," the priest gently told her.

"But everyone knows I have this affliction and they will shout after me and persecute me," she replied.

"If you will eat and try to be strong I will find a sanctuary for you, where no-one will persecute you my dear," he told her gently.

"I cannot bear Ben's attentions, when he touches me he makes my skin crawl," she sobbed again.

"I will bless you my child and we will pray together for better times for us all. Try to get strong, I will help you."

Katherine felt a spark of hope at the promise and raising herself on her elbow, she held out her other hand to him, he took it and clasped it in his arm.

When he had gone her mother returned to her, "What did he say," she asked.

"He said I would be committing a mortal sin if I allowed myself to starve to death. I will try to eat. Mother, I do not ask you for anything but this once, for the kindness my father showed you. Keep Ben away from me until I have recovered," she pleaded.

"I will do what I can," for a minute a look that could almost have been compassion, passed over the woman's face. Katherine saw it and new hope dawned in her misery.

When Ben returned that evening, full of ale from his time in the inn, Nancy accosted him as he weaved his way toward the staircase.

"Katherine is not well. I will sleep with her until she recovers, you sleep down here," startled at her own temerity Nancy took a faltering step forward. Fear, not only for Katherine's situation but for her own as well gave her the courage to speak out.

"Out of my way," Ben roared, he squinted

at her in his short-sighted manner, "She's my wife and I'll not be told where to sleep in my own house." He reached out and gripped Nancy's shoulder and she cried out at the sharpness of his long, dirty nails she could feel through her gown.

Suddenly, like a flash of lightening in her face she knew what she had subjected her daughter to. She gazed back at this man as he stared at her from eyes bleary and red-rimmed through drink.

"Let go of me or I'll scream for the constable, I am not your wife."

"You are my chattel, I am keeping you," he snarled, "You came to me and offered me your daughter, remember that."

Nancy fell on her knees covering her face, "Katherine has to recover, if she dies she will have committed a mortal sin and will remain in purgatory," Nancy crossed herself fearfully.

"What is all this popish nonsense, we are of the new church now," he gazed at her angrily.

"I can't forsake my old faith, Father Nutter has been here and blessed Katherine and she has promised to try and get well," Nancy pleaded.

"You brought a priest here? When it is a capital offence? You know what happened to Margaret Clitherow of York? Pressed to death

for harbouring priests, do you want that to happen to you? I'll report you for this, as God is my witness. Isn't it enough for Robert Nutter that his brother John paid the supreme sacrifice back in 1584 or so?"

"No, no, please do not report me. I have been a bad mother and my daughter wastes away before my eyes, may God forgive me," she crossed herself again.

"A bad mother eh? Because you promised her to me? I'm so bad am I? I took you both in, I married the girl and gave her security. What thanks have I had from the pair of you? I meant well. Now I am castigated as a cruel man on the one hand, and pointed at in the street as being married to a witch on the other hand." Suddenly sober, Ben sat down heavily in the chair, his head in his hands, all the anger gone.

Katherine, lying terrified in the upper room which was reached by an open staircase, heard the exchange. When there was the sudden silence she trembled. What had happened? Curiosity got the better of her, crawling to the staircase she peered through the rough spindles. Ben sat in the chair, her mother was still crouched by the fire from which a log fell, hissing sparks onto the stone hearth. Frightened to disturb the calm Katherine

crawled back to her bed and fell into a deep exhausted sleep.

CHAPTER 8

An uneasy truce prevailed in the household the following day. Katherine, after an untroubled night's sleep was persuaded by her mother to eat a cup of gruel, sweetened with honey. She immediately felt stronger, and more able to face her problem, and determined to try to get her full strength back.

Ben lumbered around the room, eating as he fitted his long boots on, and left the house without speaking.

Nancy felt afraid, she wondered whether he would report her for contact with Father Nutter, but no, she thought, he would be incriminating himself. There was little mercy for anyone involved with the forbidden Roman Catholicism. Doing the necessary jobs around the house she planned her future strategy. She had faced up to Katherine's decline and now saw that she must encourage her daughter to regain her health and restore her broken spirit. How to keep Ben away from the girl. He would have plenty of support from his cronies who

saw a wife as simply someone to bed, and a drudge to care for them.

Whilst Nancy worried about Ben's attitude on his return that evening, the subject of her thoughts was drinking in the inn.

"Tha's morose tonight Ben, what ails thi?" Tom Whittaker the local knife-sharpener asked him.

"Aye, tha looks as if worries o't world were upon ya shoulders, and ye wi' a gradely new wife too, even if they say she be a witch," and another man, Joe the ploughman nudged him between the shoulders, laughing at his own jest.

Ben peered into his tankard of ale gloomily.

"That's problem, don't take to me, now she's taken to 'er bed and old mother there stopped me from bedding her last night, said she was starving herself into 't grave. I'll tell you lads she's 'ad a priest there, I'll swing if that comes out. It'd be Robert Nutter, he'll be staying with his sister Alice at Roughlee."

"Aye, there'll be a priest hole there 'an no mistakes," Tom nodded, "Keep quiet about it."

"There'll be a reward for catching a priest," the other man, Joe, added, "Although I wouldn't want any hanging, drawing and quartering on my conscience," he said hastily.

"Nosy sod's been poking his nose in my affairs, blessing my wife indeed and putting her mother up to keeping me away from her," Ben swallowed another mouthful of ale, slurping it round his mouth before swallowing it.

"I've nowt agin the papists miself," said Tom, "and look at all that damage they've done to 'em, burning down the abbeys, all to steal the gold, hanging folk, all so's old King could marry a young bit o' stuff and then when 'e got 'er he cut off 'er 'ead."

"Aye, I know 'ow 'e felt if she were anything like one I've landed miself with," Ben remarked spitefully.

In the dimness of the inn a man in a tall black hat was listening intently to the drunken disclosure. His polished boots stuck out in front of him as he lounged on the oak settle, a tankard of ale in his hand. This was Richard Baldwin of Wheathead, the local miller, a known puritan and bigot, he was a member of a group who were totally anti-Catholic and wishing even to stop any ceremony in the new Church of England.

"So when did the priest visit your 'ouse?" Tom enquired.

"Sh, sh," Ben was afraid now. He looked round and his bleary eyes met the sharp gaze

of the miller, he suddenly felt afraid, and picking his cap up from the table indicated he was about to leave.

"Not so fast Ben Hewitt, it's your round, and you owe us a pork pie," Joe put his hand on his friend's arm, then following Ben's gaze he saw the miller who he knew well and realised the cause of Ben's haste. "Come on Ben, where's landlord, let's get the pies in."

The moment had passed, and Richard Baldwin, realising he would learn no more that night, emptied his tankard and strode out.

"Ee, I never saw old Baldwin sat there, do ye think he heard owt?" the ploughman asked.

"No, I saw him in time," Ben answered, none too convincingly.

By the time they had eaten their pies and washed them down with several pints of ale they had forgotten they had seen Richard Baldwin, however, he had not forgotten what he had heard and as his horse took him homeward he made plans for the following day.

CHAPTER 9

Katherine was slowly regaining her health and her mother felt able to go out for some shopping. Katherine stared round the kitchen, taking in the glowing fire, the scrubbed table, the smell of food baking in the oven.

Why can't I accept my marriage? she thought, it is comfortable here, but I can't stand Ben, that is a fact. I can't stay here. As soon as he sees I am well he will be forcing himself upon me. She moved over to the window. The house was on the main street in Colne. It was market day and there was Alison on the other side of the road, begging. Katherine excitedly banged on the window and her friend looked up and saw her, then dodging the people, horses, carts, she hurried to the door which Katherine had now opened. The two embraced, then Alison stepped back.

"Ee, luv, what's 'appened to you?" she said, "you are so thin. We heard you were ill."

"I'm getting better now Alison, but I've got

to leave here. Can you and Jamie help me?" Katherine replied.

"Where could you go? They'll fetch you back," Alison told her.

"Surely Jamie knows an old cottage, hidden away, he was always telling me about ruins he found, long abandoned. I could keep hens, and maybe a cow," Katherine's face had a longing, imaginative expression.

"Oh, luv, how could you buy things?"

"My father taught me how to look after animals. I could survive, I know I could," she broke down in tears.

Alison put her arm round her. "Listen luv, I'll talk to my mam and Jamie. We've little enough ourselves and the constable wouldn't let us harbour you, but we'll see what we can do. Next market day look out of the window at 2 p.m. and we'll be here. We can talk to you," she ensured Katherine, then giving her a quick kiss left the home.

Now I have hope, Katherine hugged the encounter to herself. When her mother returned she remarked that her daughter seemed more cheerful. Spooning broth into a bowl she handed the meal to Katherine who ate heartily.

"Leastways you aren't going to die on me,"

Nancy sounded relieved, "Ben'll be glad to see you looking better."

"No, no! Mother please don't tell him, I will be in bed when he comes in."

"I can't keep him away from you forever. You are his wife," her mother replied.

"Just another week Mother," Katherine pleaded, the thought of meeting with Jamie and Alison giving her something to look forward to.

"I saw Father Nutter in town, dressed in homespun he looked for all the world like a farmer, he said he will call again. We must keep it a secret from Ben," she said.

A few days later, secure in the knowledge that Ben was, as usual, downing ale in the inn, the priest arrived. he asked to speak to Katherine alone. In her bedroom he took her hand.

"I am pleased to see you are regaining your strength. Now I have been approached by Alison Device who told me of your request. Katherine, you are married to Ben Hewitt for better or worse," he told her.

"Father, I was forced into the marriage. I cannot be a wife to him any longer," she replied.

"My dear, my own life is in danger. I am hunted because of my faith. I do have

sympathy for you. The only answer is to ask Our Lady for sanctuary if you are in danger. If you find this sanctuary you will remain single all your life and give yourself to prayer."

"I would, I truly would Father."

"Have you considered that you may not be alone?", Katherine looked puzzled.

"You may already be with child," he gently told her. Katherine burst into tears.

"Oh, I hope not," she sobbed.

When the priest had blessed her and taken his leave Katherine's mother climbed the rickety staircase and sat down by her bed.

"Why are you crying child?" she asked.

"Father says I might already be having a baby Mother, how will I know?" she sobbed.

"The thought had crossed my mind dear, we will have to wait and see."

Her eager anticipation of meeting her friends was now crowded out by this possibility, how could she care for a child on her own, what if the child inherited her affliction?



Colne was bustling, the talk centred round the arrest of Robert Nutter, the priest, after a chase by soldiers over Weets Hill.

"Somebody betrayed him," the landlord of the inn remarked, as he handed over a frothing tankard of ale to Nicholas Bannister, the local JP.

"He has been in the area on and off for years, and twice imprisoned, he knew the risks." Bannister replied.

"He'll suffer the ultimate fate," he was joined by the puritan Richard Baldwin, a glint of malice on his rugged face.

"How they can justify the torturous end is beyond me," Bannister remarked, "I thought we worshipped a God of love."

"These papists must be stamped out, making sure we do not return to rule from Rome," Baldwin took up his ale and drank deeply.

Bannister and the landlord exchanged a look of mutual disagreement with the opinions of Baldwin. They quickly changed the subject, remarking on the price of a horse Bannister had seen in the market that day, their talk was interrupted by the arrival of Ben Hewitt who, putting a coin on the bar cried, "A tankard of ale," then receiving the drink from the landlord, took a long gulp, then wiping the froth from his mouth cried out.

"I've been deserted, mi wife 'as gone, 'er mother says she don't know where," all eyes were upon him.

"Can the constable get 'er back?" he asked the JP Bannister.

"Do you know where she is," he questioned Ben.

"She may be at Malkin Tower," he replied.

"I doubt the Demdike brood would risk that again," Bannister replied, "It is no matter for me until you find her," he turned towards his friends, making it clear the subject was closed.

Ben went to sit with Tom Whittaker who smiled to himself to witness Ben's discomfort.

"Up and gone? 'Er with no money, 'ow could she do that, "she must 'ave 'ad friends," Tom observed.

Indeed Katherine had friends. At 2 p.m. that day Alison Device, who had watched until Nancy had gone out, ran across the road and knocked urgently on the door.

Katherine opened it and drew her friend into the room. "Jamie knows a place, you must wrap up well and come now, we must run fast, 'e says." As Katherine got her shoes on and her cloak she noticed the look of longing on her friend's face.

"Here, Alison, I have another pair of shoes, if they fit you, have them," Alison slipped her feet into the shoes and turned a glowing face upon Katherine, who, looking around the room spied an old cloak of her mother's.

She said, "Take that too," Alison wrapped herself in the cloak. "Have you any money Katherine? We'll need it."

Katherine hesitated, it was against her upbringing to steal, but she knew where her mother kept some savings.

"I'm leaving home, and some of that money would have been my father's," she thought, and lifting the lid from a copper kettle on a shelf took a handful of coins and thrust them in her pocket, looking at the table she grabbed a loaf of bread and a cold pie and stuffed them in another pocket.

"Let's go, quick," Alison held the door open and they passed through.

Running quickly across the road they mingled with the crowd. They turned left down Spring Lane, a steep, stony incline, slipping and tripping on the loose stones. A brown, shaggy dog attached itself to them as they ran, yapping at their heels. The trio passed alongside rude wooden houses before ascending the hill towards Reed Lane. At the top they sank onto a grassy bank and lay looking at the sky. The sun parted the clouds and flecks of blue sky appeared. The dog licked their faces as they lay and Katherine ruffled its furry back.

"I think this dog is a good omen don't you?" she asked Alison.

"I suppose it is just a stray, it looks hungry too," Alison replied, "as I am".

"Would you like a hunk of bread now?" Katherine asked her.

"Yes, please," she spoke with fervour.

Katherine broke pieces off the loaf, sharing it between Alison and the dog, she wasn't hungry as she had eaten a good meal at twelve o'clock, she then broke the pie in half and Alison and their new-found friend ate ravenously. Obviously now the dog was their friend for life!

"We must give the dog a name," Katherine said, "what about 'Gypsy'?"

"Good idea as she or he will be wandering with us," Alison agreed, "I know the way to Jamie, we'll just keep going."

They continued down Reed Lane, past the river where Jamie had caught his fish in days gone by.

"Where is Jamie meeting us?" Katherine asked.

"He is at the house, lighting the fires for you," she replied.

"You are not leaving me anywhere lonely, are you?" Katherine asked anxiously.

"Well you won't ever be alone when you have Gypsy, will you?"

"I hope she doesn't run away."

They continued uphill, panting, keeping to the trees when they heard a rider approaching, for another hour or so. When Malkin Tower was long behind them they stopped for another rest.

"I was worried our little Jennet would have been around," Alison said, "she'd soon tell Grandmother, who will beat me when I have no money today," she looked gloomy.

Katherine put her hand in her pocket and produced some coins, "Here, give her these, what would I have done without you?"

"Thank you my friend, but don't thank me too much yet. You maybe worse off where you are going," she remarked ruefully.

"I only need a warm room, a hen or two, I can live off nothing, I will be safe," Katherine replied confidently.

They were climbing again, Pendle Hill was on their left, a brooding bulk, full of shadow, and it had started to rain. They clasped each other's hands in silence and plodded on, the dog at their heels.

In the distance a figure waved, "It's Jamie," Alison waved back, as they caught him up they felt cheered.

"You must go home now Alison, then you can't be blamed for Katherine's disappear-

ance. They'll go to Malkin Tower to look for her," Jamie stated firmly.

Seeing the sense in this Alison and Katherine embraced, then Alison was off, running, leaping over streams, the rain and wind lifting her hair like a veil behind her.

Gypsy the dog hadn't known what to do, to go or stay?

"That's a nice bitch you got there," Jamie stroked the dog looking in its mouth, feeling round its body.

"Oh, is she a girl? We didn't know. We called her Gypsy," Katherine told him. "I'm glad she stayed with me."

"Aye, you'll need company. I can't be with you all the time." He smiled his apologetic smile and held out his hand.

"Come on, nearly there. Don't be disappointed, it's rough, but warm,"

With some trepidation Katherine followed him, he was heading deeper into undergrowth. This was the Forest of Bowland, a wild place. Some said there were wolves here and Katherine started to feel nervous.

"This is Stubbs Wood, nobody comes here, just me. I trap rabbits and catch pigeons. I'll keep you fed. There's plenty of water. I knew an old hermit, used to be a monk at Whalley Abbey who used to live here. He taught me

all I know. He said I could have his house because nobody knew about it. He told me where to bury him when he died and I did. See that wooden cross? I made it and I said prayers for him like he taught me." Jamie paused, his hand on the cross, "and that is the house," he pointed.

Katherine saw a single-storey stone house with narrow windows on either side of a stone porch. Smoke curled out of a chimney stack set in the thatched roof.

"Come in and see your new home," Jamie smiled at her.

She took his hand and followed him across the clearing.

Katherine exclaimed in delight on entering the small whitewashed room, lightened by an oil lantern hanging from a beam. A glowing fire cast shadows and Gypsy lay down on the stone hearth as if to say "Thank goodness we are home". Katherine sank to her knees by the dog, holding her hands out to the warmth.

"You'll 'ave to boil the kettle and cook on the fire. Can you do that?" Jamie asked anxiously.

"Of course I can. I have no food though and nothing to drink," she replied, worried.

"I took some chicory from home, and

honey, so we will have a drink tonight, in these old tankards which were Hermit Johns," he reached up to a shelf and took them down. "There is a herb garden, quite overgrown, but you'll be able to weed it and use the herbs," he told her.

After they had drunk their chicory and eaten the rest of the loaf Katherine still felt hungry but did not want to say so. All she really wanted was to lie down and go to sleep after her long walk.

As if reading her thoughts Jamie said, "I've spread dry hay under these cloths. I washed them in the stream and dried them on the branches of trees. In the morning I will bring bread and eggs for you," and he smiled his lopsided smile.

"Are you going then?" she asked fearfully.

"You are quite safe. I have been coming here about six years, the hermit has only been dead two years. No-one else has ever passed this way. Trust me. You have the dog. Some nights I will stay, but tonight I must go home, then no-one will suspect I know where you are." He was quite firm and Katherine knew he was right.

"You must be tired. You will sleep so well, I'm sure I'll be back before you are awake," he reassured her. Then he was gone. Katherine

drew a large bolt across the door, that made her feel better.

She lay on the makeshift bed, the dog at her feet and slept.

CHAPTER 10

The following morning Nancy was stirring gruel when Ben awoke. "You must 'ave known she was going," he faced her angrily, his hand raised he advanced towards her. "No, no Ben, on my life I didn't, she never said a word to me," Nancy backed towards the door.

"I'll not 'ave you in my 'ouse another day. You and your daughter 'ave made me a laughing stock, she's a witch and bears the mark on her back. I'll have her swum I swear. The witchfinder will come to Colne. King James says we must not suffer witches to live." Ben thumped Nancy in her stomach and she was bent and winded.

"Let me get my things," she gasped.

"I give you five minutes to get what you want and then get out of here," he roared.

Nancy staggered round the room, grabbing a shawl here, a skirt, shoes, clutching them to her. She looked longingly at the copper kettle, he followed her gaze.

"So you want the kettle too?" Reaching it

down he threw it towards her. It fell on the floor and the lid came off, spilling the contents.

"Oh, so what have we here? A secret hoard?"

"That is my money from the farm," she cried, bending down she tried to grab handfuls of the coins whilst Ben planted his foot firmly over most of them.

"You get out and be thankful I don't beat you. It was a bad day for me when I struck the bargain with you." He opened the door and she almost fell down the steps outside. Several people looked at her curiously as she staggered, then leaned against the wall to get her breath back.

Where can I go, she thought. I've lost everything. She limped across the road to the church. The door stood open and she stumbled inside. It was cold and the wind whistled around the eaves.

She fell on her knees by the altar. "Oh God forgive me for what I have done," she wept.

There was no-one to comfort her and, her bout of crying over, she rose to her feet, gathering her few possessions around her. I'll go to Roughlee and throw myself on Mistress Nutter's mercy, at the thought of hard work she again felt tears coursing down her cheeks. What a mess she had made of things since Robert had died. Oh! how she wished herself

back in those happy days, and she hadn't appreciated the happiness then, she wished she could find Katherine, she would make it up to her. As these unhappy thoughts tumbled through her mind she walked slowly out of the church.

People stared at her, she was known by most, no strangers came here. She averted her gaze and began to descend Spring Lane, she had a long walk ahead of her and she stopped at a bakers shop to buy a loaf with one of the coins she had been able to conceal in her pockets.

As she trudged on she gave thanks for her health, she was not yet forty and her life with Robert had been a good one. She bemoaned her fate as she walked, she was the author of her own destruction and her heart was heavy.

She rested often and it was a couple of hours later that she approached Roughlee and made her way to Mistress Nutter's home. She came to the open kitchen door and took note of the activity within. Two maids were churning butter and behind them she could see the cook basting a leg of lamb and her mouth watered.

"What do you want Nancy?" said Cook who had just noticed the figure in the doorway. "Ben thrown you out 'as 'e?" she grinned spitefully. They all knew what Nancy had done to Katherine.

"I wanted to speak to Mistress Nutter," Nancy muttered her face red with embarrassment.

"Go get the mistress," Cook gave one of the kitchen maids a push and the girl ran from the room.

Shortly Mistress Alice Nutter swept into the kitchen, her pale face under the smooth black hair showing concern.

"What is it Nancy, why are you here?" she asked, and placing her hand under Nancy's elbow she drew her into the kitchen, ignoring the 'sniff' from Cook.

"Get Nancy a drink of ale," she ordered, frowning at the cook.

Nancy, tears never far from the surface, burst out crying and Alice handed her a kerchief. The whole sad tale came tumbling out and she pleaded for a roof over her head. "I will work hard, I promise," she begged of Alice.

"Now girls return to work," Alice spoke sharply to her servants who, burned up with curiosity had stopped churning the butter to listen!

"Come through to the parlour and we'll discuss the situation," and to the obvious disgust of Cook, Mistress Nutter passed out of the kitchen.

CHAPTER 11

Katherine had been awakened that morning by Gypsy licking her face. For a moment or two she could not remember where she was, then realisation dawned and she sat up, holding the warm, furry body to her. It was cold in the cottage and she climbed slowly down from the makeshift bed. Finding her cloak near at hand she pulled it around her with one hand, the other still clutching the dog.

She made her way to the door, light was filtering in through a small window and she felt for the bolt. Drawing it back she stepped away as it swung open and Gypsy jumped down, ran across the clearing and relieved himself against a tree!

Birds sang, a slight breeze ruffled the trees and Katherine heard the whistling and knew that Jamie was approaching. Her heart lifted as she looked in the direction of the sound. Sure enough it was he, his face alight with a lopsided grin, a sack on his shoulders.

"You slept well then?" he asked.

"Like a log," she replied, "and Gypsy has been a great comfort."

They entered the house and Jamie putting the sack down immediately started to light a fire.

"You fill the kettle from the spring, he held the vessel out to her. She took it and hurried outside, opposite her, coming from a bank or rocks was a supply of pure, clear, spring water. The hermit must have chosen this spot for the water, she thought.

They drank chicory with honey, and then Jamie cracked eggs into a frying-pan held over the now glowing fire. The chill had left the room and Katherine felt quite warm sitting on a stool by a simple wooden table.

"No-one came looking for you last night," he said, "Alison and I never mentioned your name."

Katherine looked worried, "I hope Ben doesn't ill-treat Mother," she said.

"She deserves it," he replied, "'tis her made you marry him."

"She was nicer to me lately," Katherine answered wistfully, "better than ever in my life."

"I'll get the news next market day," he reassured her.

“Will Alison come and see me one day?” she asked.

“When she can get away. Grandmother was planning to go begging at Goldshaw Booth today and needed Alison to lead her, Mother was to go carding wool for Sellars at White Moor, so no-one will miss me. If I take a rabbit home today they won’t ask any questions.”

After their meal Katherine and Jamie explored the surrounding area. Jamie pointed out herbs and vegetables grown wild, in the hermit’s garden.

“You can cultivate this garden. I’ll bring onions for you to start with, I set them at home last winter and they are ready for planting out.”

“I’ll need flour for bread, I see the bread oven in the fireplace.” Katherine started to make plans.

Jamie finished emptying his pack. There was a half loaf of bread and a couple of chicken legs, oat cakes and a few apples passed their best.

“These things will keep you until tomorrow. It will be later when I come, I have to chop wood. I will bring the axe here and chop some for you,” he told her.

Katherine was overcome with gratitude, everyone says Jamie is stupid, she thought, and he is the kindest person I know. Her eyes filled

with tears and she put her arms round him, he held her tight.

“Now don’t worry love, I’ll look after you. We just need to build up a store of food. I’ll get a hen or two up here. it just takes time, but you are safe for now.”

Jamie threw some bread and chicken to Gypsy. “I’ll have to consider her too,” he laughed, “but I’ll teach her to go rabbiting when I get time.”

When Jamie had brought her enough wood for the day, he left, promising to see her the next day.

Katherine took Gypsy into the cottage and closed the door. She found a broom in a corner and busied herself tidying up. I’ve always spent time on my own, she thought, why so am I lonely now?

Later she and gypsy wandered further into the wood. She collected nettles and wild garlic for soup, and picked a bunch of ragged robin flowers which she placed in a small container on the table on her return. Their deep red petals brightened the room.

As dusk fell she bolted the door and lay down on the bed with Gypsy. The fire was dying down, as it flickered it cast shadows on the walls. Outside an owl hooted and the wind whistled through the trees.

“I couldn’t stay here without you Gypsy. I’m afraid now, of I know not what,” she buried her face in the dog’s fur. Drawing her cloak around them, she huddled further into the bed, drowsy now, she relaxed, and soon she fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER 12

The news that Jamie brought the next day wasn't good. Ben Hewitt had been to Malkin Tower with several ruffians from Colne. They had searched the house, knocking over the poor furniture, pushing his mother and grandmother around until the old woman shouted at them promising to curse them into the grave. Ignorant and superstitious as they were, they had stopped in their tracks, making the sign of the cross and backing out of the hovel.

Outside, on their horses, emboldened by the distance now between them and the Demdike, they had called threats at the family, promising to bring the witchfinder man.

"We shall see you hang for sure, you spawn of the devil," Ben Hewitt had called as he rode away.

Katherine was upset, she didn't feel well and she was worried about her mother, Jamie cast her worries aside. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, Mistress Nutter has given Nancy a position as dairymaid, what a come-down."

"Mother and I could still have been at Barleywood, oh! how things have changed for the worse since Father died," she cried, then a feeling of nausea overcame her and she rushed outside, vomiting into the grass.

"I know not what ails me," she told Jamie as she all but crawled back into the house.

"Maybe you have eaten something which has disagreed with you?" he suggested, but she could think of nothing.

When, a week later, Katherine still had the sickness and was visibly losing weight, Jamie was worried.

"I'll bring Mam, she'll help you, she'll know a good medicine to settle your insides," he assured her.

Gypsy started to bark the following day as Katherine bent over the fireplace with one of the candles she always kept alight, the door opened and Elizabeth Device led her mother into the room. Jamie hovered in the background, holding Gypsy back from the two women.

"So this is where you are hiding," Elizabeth's face, badly deformed by an accident, looked threatening in the dim light of the cottage.

"Please do not betray me, I will kill myself before I will return to Ben Hewitt," Katherine

put her hands to her face and tears fell down her cheeks.

"Don't fear lass, we've no liking for the man, especially after the way he barged into our home. No-one will find you, the wood is too deep, no-one comes here. Jamie is the only one who knows the way," she assured Katherine who was still sobbing. "Now tell me of your ailments."

"I keep being sick," she told them.

"In a morning girl?" the old woman came across the room and placed her hands on the shrinking girl.

"Do you improve as the day goes on?"

"Yes, yes, I do," Katherine realised this to be the truth and perked up.

"Lay down on the bed child."

Demdike pressed her fingers into Katherine's stomach and she winced.

"How long since you had your monthly courses?" she asked.

"Not since I was married," the girl replied.

"You are having a baby my dear," the old woman told her.

There was a stunned silence in the room broken only by the hiss and crackle of the newly lit fire.

"I prayed that wouldn't happen," Katherine said at last, "What will I do?"

"We will help you when the time comes." Elizabeth put her hand on the girl's forehead, "We bring most of the babies in Pendleside into the world. Not many births we can't handle, is there Mother?"

"Breech births an' all, babies wrong way round, aye we done 'em all," her mother cackled, "is there owt to eat here, or owt to drink?"

Jamie hastily prepared bread from his pack and heated water for chicory brew.

"Tha knows what folk will say if they find out you've helped the girl?" his mother asked.

"Why will anyone know?" he replied.

"Difficult to keep babies a secret and Ben Hewitt would claim the child."

"No, no," Katherine, strength coming back to her, jumped down from the bed, "No-one must know, why can't we hide here forever?"

"We shall see, we shall see. Come winter you will starve here if the snow falls heavy," the old woman, her hands round the bowl of hot chicory as if seeking extra warmth, ruminated, her eyes darting round the small room. "Is this Hermit John's place then?" she asked Jamie.

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I've lived these seventy years or more, I know more than you think and your Uncle

Christopher and Blaize Hargreaves played here as boys. I doubt they've forgotten its existence but here in Stubbs Wood lies many a secret," and she laughed, evilly (thought Katherine).

"I know a better place than this," she continued, "Aye, and not so old, deeper in the wood. Oh, if only my eyes were strong, there's a veil over them but I remember, oh! I remember, when I was young and pretty – oh yes girl, I was pretty and desired by men. One of them built me a house, but he was a Catholic forbidden then as now, but your father he was, Elizabeth." The old woman bent down peering into the flames in the hearth.

"Mother you are rambling again, what house is this you talk of?" her daughter enquired.

"John Howgate, your father and Christopher's, we were married so short a time, he was punished for helping priests to escape, died in Lancaster Castle," she replied.

"We know that Mother but why has that got any association with our present predicament?, and indeed it's not our predicament, Jamie has got us into this. We've trouble enough surviving," she turned to her son, "you've always been a worry, what made

you take Katherine's problems on your poor shoulders?" she gave the lad a push and he staggered backwards.

"Leave him be, he's a good lad," said his grandmother, "he were allus sweet on the girl."

"Please stop quarrelling and tell me what I must do," Katherine pleaded.

"You'll have to take your Uncle Christopher into your confidence, a bigger, warmer place is needed for the winter and he knows one," she stated emphatically to Jamie.

"No, no please let me manage here, we'll bring in food for the winter," Katherine insisted.

"You are a foolish girl, we have hardly enough food to keep us alive, we have to beg daily, you are another mouth to feed," Elizabeth told her angrily.

"I can feed Katherine, I snare rabbits, catch fish, trap pheasants, no-one comes this way. I don't know if I can trust Uncle Christopher." Jamie was adamant.

"Suit yourself then, we will keep quiet. Your sickness will stop girl, after the third month. Your baby will be born in the spring, that is if you survive the winter," the old woman gave a grim smile, "but if the hunt gets closer you must tell my son, "he knows a safe place for the girl," she turned to Jamie.

"Take us home now," Elizabeth told her son and Jamie reluctantly got to his feet.

"Can you manage until tomorrow?" he asked Katherine, "I cannot return today, I have to pluck pheasants for Mistress Nutter."

"Yes, I will be all right, you have left me plenty of firewood," she replied gratefully.

"Can't put old heads on young shoulders," Demdike told them, "believe me, before this winter is through, you will need help."

"Thank you for walking all this way to see me," Katherine told both women.

"Remember, tell Christopher Howgate I say he has to help you," the old woman squinted through near-blind eyes at the young girl, "Remember."

"I will," promised Jamie, on Katherine's behalf.

CHAPTER 13

The three walked on steadily, climbing upwards. "How did you find the hermit's place Jamie?" his grandmother asked as she took his arm. He guided her along the narrow path to a clearing in the wood.

"Grandmother, I explore everywhere. I didn't know you knew of it," he replied.

"Lad, when I was young this forest was full of homeless monks and displaced priests. Turned out they were from monastery and church when King Harry formed the Church of England. He broke the ties with the Roman Church and only those who went along with his new ways survived," she said.

"Those who pretended to go along with him you mean," muttered Elizabeth in the background.

"Wait 'ere a while," Jamie said, and ran back across the clearing where he dragged old logs and a large stone over the entrance to the path they had just left. The two women sat down to wait, lost in their own thoughts and memories.

“Here you are Mother,” Elizabeth handed over a hunk of bread from her pocket, “we’ll get water from the spring.” The two ate hungrily. Jamie returned, panting from his exertions. His mother silently handed him a crusty piece of loaf and he lay on the grass beside them.

“Swallows is off,” he muttered, glancing skywards, “sign of an early winter.”

“What did I tell you?” his grandmother asked, “’er won’t survive up ’ere.”

“She will, I’ll look to her needs, you see,” he replied.

“Never known you so set on anything son. Be careful. We are poor, although we’ve known better days when your father was alive.* Look what happened to him through helping folk. Taking messages from village to village and at the end no-one to say how he drowned,” his mother’s face clouded with the painful memory of her loss.

“Who would want to do me harm?” her son asked.

“Them as are spiteful,” she retorted angrily, “Do you think Ben Hewitt is going to let this desertion go? He’ll be sniffing around again, he’s been scorned Jamie, no-one likes that.”

*A cry of Innocence

"We can say we heard she went into Yorkshire," Jamie suggested.

"We'll say nothing, or we'll be asked where we heard it," his grandmother snapped at him.

"Come along now, we've a few miles to go," Jamie got to his feet.

"Lucky I'm used to walking," his grandmother muttered, "Summat keeps me fit."

They made good progress, up through Twiston now and an odd cottage to pass.

"We'll be noticed, tongues will wag you see, 'twas too early when we passed afore, I don't like it at all," Elizabeth looked round. A dog set up barking and was answered by another, and another, 'til the valley rang and echoed with the noise.

A farmer came out of his byre to look at the odd trio as they passed.

"Well if it isn't Elizabeth Southernns, what brings you here?" he asked.

"Device is the name Tom Robinson," she retorted "and mine was never Southernns. Howgate was my name."

"So you say, and the Demdike herself," he turned to look at the old woman, suddenly his features softened, "My dad had a soft spot for you love, times were hard for us of the true religion, isn't that so my dear?"

"That is so Tom, your father sheltered Howgate but to no avail," she replied.

"Come inside and rest your feet, have a cup of milk or ale," they followed him into the cool kitchen. A ginger cat awoke from sleeping in a rocking chair, she arched her back and spread her claws before springing onto the windowsill and disappearing through an opening.

"Well Tom you are the first to welcome us for a while, we are driven to begging for a living," Elizabeth accepted a cup of steaming milk.

"We go back a long way, I remember the accident at the mine, I helped dig you and others out. Poor Miles Nutter died that day," they were silent remembering.

"I'm alone 'ere now, wife died a year gone," he said, "and my son is married over Whalley way. Works on his wife's father's farm. Didn't want to stay here and 'slave for the benefit of the Asshetons', he told me."

"Aye, but the Asshetons don't own it all," the old woman interrupted, "plenty of folk between 'ere, Rimington and Gisburn can call a corner or two their own.

"That's true, half the area is covered by forest though, it'll take years to cultivate that, if anyone ever has a mind. There've been rough outlaws living in the forest in our day

and displaced monks from Whalley and Sawley Abbeys an' all." They murmured in agreement, glad of the rest and the acceptance of their situation by this kind neighbour from bygone times.

"Any road, what brings you so far out of your way?" he asked.

Luckily Elizabeth replied, "We thought we might do better begging in Clitheroe today, but we only got as far as Rimington and Ma wanted to turn back."

"Rimington's far enough, I'd be agreeing with you there," he nodded at her mother whose lined face actually broke into a semblance of a smile.

Later, on the road to the village of Barley they turned left in the direction of Blacko. Walking across the moor they passed several humble dwellings built around row upon row of cultivated pieces of land, with an odd figure working a hoe or burning straw.

"How they get anything to grow up here is beyond me," the Demdike said.

"Mostly they keep pigs and hens," Jamie volunteered the information.

The road eventually sloped sharply downward and they could see smoke rising from a tall chimney.

"Wheathead," said Elizabeth, "I doubt we'll

get a welcome and milk there, the miller Baldwin hates the poor. He may be poor himself some day."

"We'll see, we'll see," the old woman chuckled, "let's spoil his day 'ee?"

"Grandmother, don't go antagonising him, we have enough enemies," pleaded Jamie.

The thought of a confrontation seemed to give the old woman a new lease of life and, still hanging on to her daughter she walked more briskly, as they approached Wheathead a dog began to bark and the miller came out to see who was there. He frowned when he saw them, and sneering called out.

"Are you here to turn my milk sour you old witch?" he asked.

"If you think I'm a witch who can cast spells be careful my man that I don't turn you into a toad, and throw you in your own mill pond," she cackled with glee, she had always enjoyed a battle with the puritan bigot Baldwin.

"Get off my ground before I set my dog free," he replied angrily, "I will see you hang one day."

"I care not for thy threats, hang thyself," she called as they hurried away.

Richard shouted after them, "What have you done with the winged girl, Ben Hewitt says you are responsible for her disappearance?"

“She has flown away,” Demdike shrieked,
“Ha, ha, the bird has flown.”

CHAPTER 14

The autumn came with mellow warmth and without much wind so the leaves stayed on the trees, turning them to gold, russet and yellow. Rose hips glowed in the sunshine and Katherine collected them together with blackberries which grew in abundance. Katherine and Gypsy lounged in the afternoon sun, she looked round her at her world of green and gold. All stillness and peace, she thought, can this haven always be mine? She was waiting for Jamie to come. His visits were later now as he had odd jobs around the farms. He had to be careful not to do anything which may attract attention. Sometimes, he could not visit at all.

At the end of the golden afternoon, as the sun was setting behind Pendle Hill Gypsy's ears suddenly pricked up, "Is it Jamie you can hear!" Katherine asked hopefully, sure enough pushing his way through brambles which caught on his clothes as he passed, his figure could be seen. The sun caught autumn lights

in his hair and as he came nearer Katherine noticed how brown his face was. "You look like a gypsy after all the sun this summer," she laughed with pleasure to see him.

"I live like a gypsy, except I don't move from place to place with a covered cart. Sometimes I have thought it may be a safer route to follow. Except gypsies know where to go. It is only in this area I know my way about," he replied. He flung himself down on the grass beside her and together they watched a gaudy drake fly across the clearing, followed by his neat brown wife, and Gypsy licked Jamie in welcome.

"Are you hungry Jamie?" she asked.

"I have brought a hunk of pork. Guess where I got it?" He put his hand in his pack, producing a parcel in muslin.

"I can't imagine," she held out her hand eagerly.

"I was working for Mistress Nutter today. Plucking hens and cleaning her yard, I think Master Charles is around but no-one is saying anything," he told her.

"Charles will suffer the same fate as his uncles if he is caught. All for worshipping God in their own way. I haven't had any religious experiences in church since I came here and yet I feel a place in my heart amongst the encircling trees," she said as they both ate

heartily, throwing tit-bits to Gypsy all the time. A brave chaffinch flew down and picked up a morsel of bread. All was peace in the wood.

"I was telling you, when you interrupted me," he laughed, "that I was working for Mistress Nutter today, and who else works there now?"

"Oh you mean you saw my mother?" Katherine looked fearful.

"Don't worry, your name wasn't mentioned, but as I was leaving Nancy hurried after me, she held out this pork and said Mistress Nutter had told her to give it to me. I think it was for you. I am sure she knows I care for your needs," he smiled his slow, sweet smile.

"As long as no-one else suspects," she stared moodily into the forest.

"No-one can follow me. I am too quick. There are so many hiding places, trees to climb, I am quite safe.

"I am feeling a lot better now. Your grandmother told me my sickness would pass," she remarked.

"Before I forget." Jamie rooted in his deep bag producing several handfuls of leaves. "Grandmother says you are to make an infusion with these and drink it twice a day."

Katherine looked questioningly at him, "It's raspberry leaves, twill help with the birth."

"Come for a walk," he held out his hand and helped her to her feet."

Together they pushed their way through brambles and weeds which had flourished during the summer. The smell of wood and earth and wild vegetation rose chokingly and bees and flies buzzed around.

"Let's go back," Katherine puffed, "I'm surprised you want to walk anyway. You have already walked miles today."

"I like to keep moving," he laughed, but turned and retraced their steps through the vegetation.

"I have to check my snares, there is an old dog fox who has been stealing my rabbits, I've seen him sneaking away. I will get there before him tonight," Jamie looked stern. "I had given you the pork so I will have to take something home for the pot or all the family will have will be a soup of herbs."

"You have a great deal of responsibility Jamie," Katherine said, "and now you have me on top of everything."

"I don't mind, we've been friends all our lives," he assured her. "Alison sends her love, she'll visit you soon."

"I understand, I am not lonely now, but I may be when the dark nights come, and the cold weather," she replied.

"Starting next week I will bring more wood. You collect what you can and take it into the house to keep dry. I will try and get coal from Greystones, several of the local men are trying to re-open Miles' shaft. It will be difficult for me to carry, and a truck will arouse suspicion. I must think about this. I told you Tom Robinson made us welcome when I brought Mother and Grandmother, if you are in need I know he will help you. Blaize Hargreaves always gives me a wave. Remember that all are not our enemies, which you are in danger of forgetting dear," he spoke reassuringly.

"I have to keep telling myself the same, but I feel a lot of men are on Ben's side. They think a wife has to put up with all a man meets out," she shuddered remembering her treatment at Ben's hands.

"Well you are safe now, so for the foreseeable future you can relax and keep strong."

Katherine fell asleep early that night, Gypsy curled up beside her. Outside owls hooted and bats swooped and circled noiselessly around the small stone building.

CHAPTER 15

Pendle Hill was a solid bulk against the night sky. The moon beamed down on the big end giving the impression of a giant iced cake. Several clouds scudded across the sky pursued by a busy wind which bent the tops of the trees. An owl hooted and swooped in front of the horseman riding along the rutted track.

Jamie Device was considered by some to be somewhat slow in the head. In reality however, his knowledge of the flora and fauna of the countryside and his observations of the local populace far exceeded that of the general farm-worker going about his daily business, and tonight as he set his traps he had observed several horsemen heading in the direction of Roughlee. Lean and wiry from a diet of game, and fleet of foot, he ran, a plump rabbit tucked into a bag which hung round his neck. He kept up with the horseman who was hindered in his progress by deep ruts and pot-holes in the track. Arriving at a farmhouse at Thorneyholme the home of Robert and Blaize

Hargreaves. Jamie observed that the horseman had been expected because a figure hurried out to open the gate. Jamie stood on tiptoe to peer over the wall, it was too high and he slipped his feet into the gaps between the stones hauling himself upwards. A loose stone fell with a thud and the two figures turned quickly. Jamie bent low behind the wall, the moon, temporarily obscured by a cloud helped conceal his presence.

Reassured the men entered the house, a beam of lantern light briefly lit the courtyard, then all was silent.

Jamie noticed that no watchdog guarded the approach, and curious to know why all was so quiet he dropped quietly to the ground on the inside of the wall. Leaving his bag behind he crept towards the window from which a shaft of light showed between ill-fitting shutters. He recognised the man now, Thomas Firber, the latest arrival, he was removing his cloak and, behind a small table a priest busily prepared a communion. Robert and Blaize Hargreaves, Christopher and John Bulcock, Dick Nutter and his son Miles completed the gathering.

Jamie knew he was witnessing a Roman Catholic mass, he remembered it was long forbidden from the days of Henry VIII. Stories passed down through families told of tortures

and hangings. His own Grandfather Howgate had perished, but the faithful continued resolutely to keep this faith alive. Jamie had listened to tales of the old Queen Elizabeth's fear of these people known as papists. Hadn't she had her own cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, beheaded, because she had been a threat to her throne? and now Mary's son James, a Protestant sat on the English throne in far away London. Jamie knew King James hated Catholics because a group of them, led by Guy Fawkes, had tried to blow him up in the Houses of Parliament, and what terrible retributions had followed.

Backing quietly away from the window he returned to retrieve his bag and climbed quickly over the wall. He ran with long, loping strides alongside the river, passing the house at Roughlee, where the Nutters lived and moving quickly towards home. Suddenly he was aware of a gathering of horsemen beside the road and spied a steel helmet, soldiers! they showed in the light of the moon coming out from behind a cloud, the arms of Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe on their breast plates. Jamie was not so simple. He realised the significance of this gathering and he noticed the tall figure of Richard Baldwin of Wheathead, whose pointed hat showed against the silver helmets.

It was a significant Christian Saint Day, hadn't his mother and grandmother unearthed their crucifix that morning?

They must be bound for Thorneyholme, someone must have betrayed the gathering. Jamie thought he heard the horses behind him, he ran like a deer, back along the track taking a short-cut over the hill, his breath now coming in hard pants. He reached the house in Thorneyholme and banged on the door, he almost fell into the house when it opened, gasping "soldiers coming this way".

"It's Jamie Device, he says soldiers are coming," Blaize Hargreaves turned into the house, hurriedly all sign of the mass was removed, the priest, helped by Blaize climbed a rope ladder, up, up until he opened a panel hidden by the smoke of the fire whilst Jamie watched fascinated.

The group donned cloaks and were quietly drinking a tankard of ale when there came a thundering at the door.

Blaize Hargreaves, a look of feigned surprise on his face opened the door and walked out. A Captain, still on horseback, his sword, used for banging on the door, held aloft, shouted rudely, "We have a warrant to search your premises, we have information there is a forbidden ceremony here this night."

"There has been no ceremony here, your information is false, and your manner is discourteous in the extreme sir," Blaize Hargreaves was no uneducated peasant, but a strong character, not a man to be brow-beaten.

Richard Baldwin now pushed forward, "You are known as a papist, let us in and we will see what you are hiding."

Blaize stood to one side, "Baldwin, you have no legal right in my home, but as my friend and I have nothing to hide, having been merely engaged in agricultural discussions involving buying and selling of stock, come in and see for yourself."

Baldwin, followed by the now dismounted Captain pushed Blaize aside as they entered the house. Blaize, angry at their insolence, took Baldwin by the arm, "You bigoted, narrow-minded puritan, do not presume upon me and my friends. Your mill is not the only one where we can mill our flour, I promise you, I will build a mill of my own and ruin you." In that moment Blaize determined that he would do that.

The Captain looked around, he realised he had been outwitted and started to mutter his apologies when Baldwin, noticed Jamie crouched in the single nook of the fireplace.

“What have we here in this gentleman’s gathering, the spawn of the Demdike?” He reached down and catching the youth by the ear pulled him to his feet. Jamie winced in pain.

Dick Nutter stepped forward.

“Leave the lad alone Baldwin,” he said angrily and knocked Baldwin’s hand away.

Blaize spoke again, “How dare you come into my home and question who is here?”

Baldwin was silenced for a second, taken aback, and the Captain addressed him brusquely.

“It seems sir you have brought us on a wild goose chase,” he walked outside barely acknowledging Blaize who followed him and, speaking angrily declared, “A complaint will go to Lord Shuttleworth tomorrow, you cannot abuse a man’s home on such poor evidence, you will be punished for this.”

The Captain, now obviously embarrassed, signalled to his men that they were leaving.

Baldwin began to follow him out, but in the manner of the austere and ignorant man he was, could not help trying to have the last word, he turned to Jamie who shrank before his gaze.

“You, Device, had a hand in this. I saw you were panting, you had not been here long,”

then in an aside to the other man, "and you are known papists."

"You may fool the Captain but you do not fool me."

Robert Hargreaves now spoke.

"Get out of this house Baldwin and leave honest men to be about their business, our religion is no concern of yours and does not hurt you, why do you seek to hurt us?"

As the door slammed behind him, the men relaxed and tankards were filled.

Blaize handed one to Jamie, "Drink this lad and do not fear Baldwin he has no proof of anything, we are all in your debt this night. The others nodded in agreement.

"He will find a way to persecute my family." Jamie trembled as he took the tankard.

"You tell us if he tries," Blaize reassured him, and turning to the Bulcocks he said, "I meant it you know, about the mill, are you in agreement?"

"Yes, good idea, where would we site it?" Christopher asked.

"That is why I am looking at you," Blaize smiled determinedly, "What about on your land at Whitehough, there is water a plenty there."

"We will order the mill wheel tomorrow, what say all of you?" A joint endeavour against

Baldwin," John said. Tankards were raised and drained in unison.

"I will go now, I left a rabbit outside, I'm glad Baldwin didn't see that," Jamie smiled ruefully.

"Here lad," Blaize tossed a coin in his direction and Jamie caught it, "we won't forget what you did. Your father would have been proud of you." They were quiet as they remembered Jamie's father Will Device the pedlar, who had taken messages around the country to all Roman Catholics, and who had been drowned in an accident of which Baldwin had been suspected in having a hand.

"Is it safe for the priest to come down, he will be cramped in the hiding place and near suffocation from the smoke," Dick observed.

"The Captain won't return, he is too embarrassed and will be on his way back to Gawthorpe now," Blaize replied.

Jamie made his way home, keeping to the clusters of trees, he saw the tall hat of Baldwin as he slid down a muddy bank and wisely took off in the opposite direction. For the moment Baldwin's plans had been foiled.

CHAPTER 16

Ben Hewitt was in his seat in the inn at Colne, with his usual cronies when Richard Baldwin walked in casting a distasteful glance around him.

Without preamble he addressed Ben, "I've been looking for you Hewitt, I'm surprised you spend your hard-earned money in this den of iniquity."

"Just a minute, you there," the innkeeper had overheard this remark, "I keep a good house here, no ruffians allowed or bawdy women, if you aren't here to buy ale you had better go. Don't stay here upsetting decent customers."

"Hewitt, I'll see you outside," Baldwin told him, turning on his heel he left without so much as a glance at the innkeeper.

"Who does he think he is?" the innkeeper asked Ben, "Don't go to him, cheeky sod." His friends nodded agreement.

"I'll see what he wants," Ben stood up, "I'll be back directly."

Outside Baldwin was waiting.

"Hewitt, where's your wife?"

"I don't know where she is, disappeared she has," he replied.

"Do you think the Demdike knows anything?"

"We've turned over Malkin Tower twice and no sign," Ben replied, "she isn't hiding there."

"I'll get the information out of the young lad if I have to kill him," Baldwin stated.

"What is it to you anyway? I don't need your help," Ben was taken aback at the outburst.

"I need to question Jamie Device on another matter," Baldwin replied.

"Well, don't use me as an excuse Baldwin, I'll tell the constable what you said if ill befalls that poor lad. Count me out, I'm well rid of my wife. I don't want your help," Ben went back inside the inn seething.

Heads turned as he walked to his seat.

"What did he want?" the innkeeper asked.

Ben took a long drink from his tankard, then looking at the curious faces around him said, "This 'ere ale's flat, fill it up and I'll tell you. He handed the empty tankard to the innkeeper, who looking inside it said, "You've drunk it I see, flat or not," but proceeded to refill it nevertheless!

"Baldwin is on his usual persecution mood, it's young Jamie Device he's got his knife in for," Ben looked round at the curious faces, "threatened to kill the lad, so I don't know what he's done to upset Baldwin."

"Doesn't take much to upset Baldwin," Joe the ploughman muttered, "I remember talk of him harming the lad's father, the pedlar, although 'twere never proved." Several of the crowd nodded in agreement.

"Baldwin's daughter died, he was said to 'ave blamed the Demdike," Tom Whitaker ventured a few words.

"The Demdike can't win. Farmers and folk go to her for potions for themselves and their animals when they are ill. The woman is an uneducated peasant, she can only guess what is wrong and sometimes her cures work," Sam Greenwood, the local blacksmith observed.

"She killed John Nutter's cow up at Bull Hole," Tom Whitaker remarked, "or so 'twas said."

"Rubbish," replied the smith, "let's have some common sense, Nutter's cow was badly, couldn't get up. It would have died anyway. Just a pity the old woman gave a potion when she was asked, but remember, the woman has no money, except what she earns from her herbs and potions."

The friends nodded in agreement, tankards were refilled and talk turned to other subjects. Baldwin temporarily forgotten.

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Baldwin rode home, his face stern, his lips drawn together in a light line. He was angry and as his horse faltered in the loose stones on the ascent up Slipper Hill, he used his whip on the unfortunate animal, this only served to make the horse more unsteady. However, the violence extended to the dumb animal somewhat assuaged his own anger.

Reaching his home at Wheathead he called loudly for his servant Jim Foulds to take the horse and stable it, giving the lad a cuff on the side of his head as he passed. Jim gave a baleful look as he headed to the stable, mentally wishing roles were reversed. How he would love to cuff Baldwin he thought.

Hearing her husband's angry orders to the young lad Baldwin's wife exchanged glances with her son and daughter, they awaited his entry into the house with trepidation, gauging his mind. This was not a happy household.

"Did you wait supper for me?" he demanded, looking at the empty dishes and dirty plates he could see they had finished.

“We did not know when you were coming home. We waited an hour past our usual time. Your food is in the oven,” his wife scuttled round placing his cutlery and going to the oven she ladled a large amount of meat and vegetables onto a plate. She could see that her husband was struggling between anger and hunger. The relief in the room was palpable when he drew up his chair and began to eat. Even the dog, his ears down, risked re-arranging his resting position by the fire!

“Have you all lost your tongues then?” he demanded, having wiped up his surplus gravy with a hunk of bread.

No-one replied.

“Well Mary,” he turned his glance upon his daughter, “Get this table cleared.” Swivelling round in his chair he looked at his son Christopher who met his gaze without flinching.

“Are all the beasts locked up,” he asked.

“Of course, Sir, when have they not been?” the youth replied.

“Don’t question me you insolent oaf,” Baldwin roared.

“I am not insolent Father. I do my work for you and you never appreciate me.”

Baldwin jumped to his feet, “No-one is

appreciated in this life, be glad you have food in your belly."

"It's more than some of the poor people round here have," Baldwin continued.

"Since when have you cared about the poor people?" his son asked.

"Hush, hush, don't argue with your father," his mother went to stand between the two.

"You'll do well to keep a civil tongue in your head or you'll find yourself somewhere else to live," Baldwin raised his fist.

"If I find somewhere else to live at least I'll be a paid servant and not an unpaid slave as I am here," the youth replied.

Baldwin looked near to collapse from shock. His eyes protruded, his face was red and contorted. he approached his son with his arm raised.

"You have ill-treated me all my life and from this day I am telling you I will take no more. If you ill-treat Mother and Mary I will take them away too," Christopher stood up and was a head taller then this father.

"I will cut you off without a penny," his father shrieked.

"I am young and strong and I will be paid for what I do. You may as well know this. I am going to marry Maria Redfern and Dick

Nutter has promised me a job and a cottage," Christopher stood his ground.

"Maria Redfern? Did you know of this?" he turned to his wife.

"Chris told me today," she whimpered.

"Granddaughter of the Chattox? A witch if I ever saw one," his father shouted.

"And Dick Nutter will answer to me for luring you away."

"Dick Nutter is not afraid of you and did you know he and the Hargreaves and Bulcocks are building a flour mill at Whitehough?" his son asked grimly.

"Papists one and all, you have been consorting with them and spawn of witches. Get out of my house now." Christopher had prepared for the eventuality and strode towards the door. He stopped by his mother down whose cheeks tears were streaming, her daughter held her close.

"Remember, if he touches either of you again he will answer to me."

The door slammed behind him. Baldwin looked at his wife and daughter with derision. "Don't think to follow him, I won't suffer desertion from either of you. Here you are and here you stay." He stormed upstairs and they heard him preparing for bed with relief.

CHAPTER 17

The sun was still high but in an hour or so it would drop behind Pendle Hill. Three white swans were sailing across the sky in majestic flight. Their necks were stretched out in a perfect line pointing towards the glowing west. Their wing-beats were slow and strong and filled with music. They passed overhead, their wings gilded by the sun.

Katherine gazed after them, her hand across her forehead to shield her eyes from the sun. She wished, fleetingly, that she could put her arms around the neck of a swan and be borne away to another life, but Gypsy was barking and she turned, expectantly, hoping Jamie was arriving. Oh, joy of joys he was, and not alone, Alison with him. Katherine ran across the clearing to embrace her friend and Jamie looked on, grinning at their obvious happiness in the reunion.

They sat together on the doorstep and ate hunks of bread and cheese and drank scalding chicory drink prepared by Jamie. Alison

brought the news from Colne market and Katherine was thirsty for information of any kind to offset the loneliness of her days.

"They are saying Ben Hewitt is ill," Alison said, "He has not been to his market stall for a week."

"I do not feel sorry for him if that is what he will think," replied Katherine bitterly.

"Your mother is still working for Mistress Nutter," said Alison.

"I don't suppose she has any choice," Katherine answered, "Anyway I am happy," and smiled, leaning down to stroke Gypsy who lay at her feet content.

"We are going to stay tonight, we've got it all planned," Alison told her.

Jamie, as usual pottered about the area, stacking logs and chopping kindling. The water in the spring bubbled and ran clear into a channel Jamie had made and he quickly filled several containers to take into the house.

The trio talked late into the night, then slept deeply, whilst outside the wind whistled through the trees and owls and bats whirred noiselessly, hunting.

They awakened early, Gypsy was at the door scratching to be let out and Alison and Katherine followed her, washing themselves

in the stream and relieving themselves in a corner of the wood.

Jamie had already lit the fire when they returned to the house. They shared out bread and pieces of chicken.

"This is good," Katherine commented, "I should have some chickens and then I would have fresh eggs. When they were old I could boil them and make soup."

"You would have to kill them yourself," Jamie reminded her.

"No, I wouldn't, you would do it for me," she laughingly replied. "I know how to pluck them, father taught me."

"Well, I'll see what I can do, but that old dog-fox will be after them if you don't watch out," he replied.

"Maybe I'll wait 'til the winter is over," Katherine remarked, "I've noticed a frost one or two mornings this week."

"Yes, winter is on the way," Jamie looked worried, "Grandmother keeps reminding me that I must ask Tom Hartley to look out for you."

"Can we trust him?" Alison asked.

"Grandmother thinks so, she keeps mentioning a house where grandfather Howgate lived, she thinks you should go there.

Next week I will go there and see what state it is in," Jamie spoke reassuringly.

"Oh, I've been so happy here this summer," Katherine said.

"The fact is that the other house will be warmer, has more room for storing coal and wood. You may get snowed up you know and you'd starve here," he replied.

"We have had a few good winters though," Katherine stated hopefully.

"Grandmother says we are due a bad one. She has been boiling up blackberries and apples to keep for the winter, damsons too. I'll bring some." Jamie was busily planning.

"Why can't we go today, all of us," Alison asked.

"Oh, yes, let us all go," Katherine looked hopefully at Jamie. He put his hand over his eyes, thinking. Katherine remembered something her father had once said, "Jamie Device is fay, he sees things we don't see, and hears things too."

Her mother had admonished him rudely, saying, "The boy is simply stupid."

But her father had insisted that was not so, and now Katherine looked at Jamie who seemed in a trance, then he shook his head, looked and said, "We go to the right outside

this house, the hermit showed me, I see it in my mind, yes, we'll go."

"I feel so well now Alison, your grandmother said I would stop feeling sick," Katherine told her friend.

"Are you taking the raspberry leaf juices?" Alison asked.

"Oh, yes, what does it do?" Katherine asked.

"It makes you more able to relax when the baby is coming. Mother says we must take you to Malkin Tower nearer your time," Alison replied.

"Well it's a few months off yet, I think it will be March or April," Katherine said, "I have the worst of the winter to suffer."

The three set off, leaving a cross Gypsy behind in the house each with a package of food and drink round their necks. Jamie took a knife and peeled pieces of bark off the trees as they passed, at their questioning looks he said this was to show which way they had come so that they would not get lost on their way back.

Their way was choked with brambles and nettles which dragged on the girls' long skirts, then Jamie stopped, "Look a set," he said, and pointing they looked across a small clearing where a badger had dug out his set, his five-

toed print was easily seen and his ammoniac strong scent caused them to wrinkle their noses.

A squirrel chattered in an elm tree, a bird called a warning, a trio of notes told of a hunting kestrel or a jay stealing eggs, a rabbit scurried in front of them, still they pushed on behind Jamie. Insects buzzed around them and they swatted at the flies which were successful in biting them. Katherine slipped on a patch of muddy water and put her hand into a bunch of nettles, she squealed in pain. Jamie found a clump of dock leaves which they rubbed into the red lumps to ease the stinging.

"I'm beginning to wish we hadn't come," Katherine remarked ruefully to Alison.

"Do you want to go back?" Jamie asked. "I think it will be another half hour or so."

"We've come this far, let's go on," Alison urged.

"Oh, all right then," Katherine reluctantly agreed, "but remember we have to go all the way back."

"It will be easier going back," Jamie reassured them, "we have more or less made the path."

"It's a good thing we never brought Gypsy, she would have got lost," Katherine said thankfully.

“We’ll have our food when we get there,” Jamie told them.

They came to a little stream and Jamie had to look round for stones for them to step on, he held out his hand to each of them as they jumped across. As Alison stepped onto the last stone it turned over and with a gasp she felt the cold water cover her foot and the bottom of her dress swirled into the water, but Jamie gave her a tug and she jumped onto the bank thankfully.

“Oh, I will be so uncomfortable now,” she remarked.

“Now you know why I wanted to turn back,” said Katherine.

Not far now, I remember that stream was near the house.” Jamie crossed over a mossy glade where autumn leaves were falling gently making patterns on the moss. Sunlight filtered through the trees and the ground was easier to walk on. Then they saw ahead of them a man-made wall of stone, broken in parts and they climbed through a gap. Katherine gasped in wonder as an old stone house showed ahead of them. It had diamond paned windows, a porch almost covered by a crimson rambling rose, although past its best a few late blooms clung to the branches. Honeysuckle too climbed over the long-abandoned garden and

dandelions, buttercups and meadowsweet vied with bindweed for control on the ground.

"It's beautiful, why does no-one live here?" Alison asked.

"It belonged to Grandfather Howgate, so it's Grandmother's really, a lot of the stone, and the porch came from Sawley Abbey when it was burned down," her brother told her, "He was arrested and hanged for harbouring priests here, there is a secret room if we can find it, and a way out, but it is so isolated no-one came here after he was killed, Grandmother has deeds though but we are too poor to claim it she says, and how could we live here, we have trouble enough keeping body and soul together at Malkin Tower. It's called Kittycaul house."

Katherine was at the door, it was bolted on the outside, she tried to slide the bolt back but it was rusted over.

"No-one has been here for a long time," she said.

"Not since I came with the hermit five years ago," Jamie remarked. He levered his knife under the bolt and after working for about five minutes he was able to draw it back. They all pushed, and the old door, groaning on its hinges swung slowly back. Spiders ran terrified all over the floor which was covered with

mouse droppings, a candle left to burn in a candlestick was stiff as a frozen waterfall. The girls hopped, first on one foot, then on another.

"Oh it's so dirty, I couldn't live hear," Katherine said despondently.

"Have faith, I cleaned up the house you are now in, I can clean this," Jamie reassured her. He crossed the hallway and opened a door, "see this room is better; they followed him round, there was old furniture, a settle, cupboard, chairs. "It was as if someone had just walked out one day and never came back," Alison said.

"That is exactly what happened," Jamie told her.

They went upstairs, amazingly no windows were broken. There were beds, still with the hangings on, all moth-eaten and covered in spiders webs.

"We can't keep coming and going," Katherine said, "If I am to live here I will clear out one room first," she clapped her hands, "and live in that until the other rooms are done."

"It's a lovely house, I will be safe here," she said.

"Your nearest village will be Rimington, no-one knows us there," Jamie told her.

"I will need a cat to clear away the mice,"

Katherine said, "and Gypsy will love it here," she walked over to the window and wet her finger and rubbed it on the pane of glass. "Look at the view," she told Alison, "all the trees, and in the distance the hill called Penny-ghent, and Ingleborough."

"From the back window you can see Pendle Hill too," Jamie told her.

They ran through to a back bedroom and clearing a space in that window pane there was Pendle.

"Pendle Hill looks different from this side," Alison commented, "Oh, I will help you to clean this house. We must tell Mother and Grandmother."

"I will, because after all, it was Grandmother's idea that we use this house, and it's hers," Jamie replied. In the kitchen they found pewter plates and tankards for ale. "we'll go into the garden to eat our food," Jamie decided.

The sun was warm on their faces as they shared their repast, Katherine talking excitedly about the house.

"It's so big, nearly as big as Mistress Nutter's house at Roughlee," she said.

"We'll explore the outbuildings when we have eaten," Jamie decided.

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There was a stable, another building which may have housed cattle. Everywhere there were weeds, nettles, rose-bay-willow-herb.

"This area will take some clearing out," Jamie remarked.

"I can have hens," Katherine said, "they can be shut in a building at night."

"Can we light a fire next time we come?" Katherine asked Jamie.

"I will have to clean the chimneys first, birds will probably have nested in them," he replied. "Anyway, we had best set off back, it took us over an hour to get here."

They agreed and locking the door again they made their way through the gap in the wall and towards the stream. They crossed the water more successfully this time and hurried onwards.

The sun had gone behind the clouds and suddenly the air smelled of storm, there was a roll of thunder and a flash of lightening and large drops of rain began to fall.

As their way was mostly under trees they pressed on, becoming more and more bedraggled, the girls' long skirts hampering their progress.

It was with the utmost relief that they saw the house in front of them. They could hear Gypsy barking and in one last spurt they ran

to the door, laughing together they almost fell into the room. Gypsy dashed past them with a look as if to say "why have you been away so long?"

"I'm glad we are not walking home in this rain," Alison stated thankfully, shaking her wet hair.

Jamie was blowing onto the embers of the fire and soon had it rekindled, a pot of hot water merrily bubbling soon restored their spirits. Gypsy was scratching at the door to be let in, and immediately began to shake herself wetting them again and they were convulsed with laughter.

They shared the remaining food and Katherine made pancakes with eggs she had saved the way her mother had taught her, holding the pan near the fire.

"I wish I could stay with you," Alison said, "you know we are all supposed to go to the new church or we have to pay a fine on a Sunday."

"What will happen when you didn't go today?" Katherine asked.

"Baldwin will come for a shilling and if I haven't got one he'll put me in the stocks," she replied.

Katherine went to a pot in the corner and removing the lid she put her hand inside.

“Here is your shilling Alison, I haven’t spent this money I brought with me, I hope there comes a day when stocks are not allowed and people can please themselves whether or not they go to church.”

“Oh Katherine I don’t know how to thank you.”

“Come with me to Stubbs Wood,” Katherine said, “we will hide together.”

“Jamie never goes to church and Baldwin doesn’t fine him,” Alison stated.

“He thinks I am stupid so I don’t do anything to make him change his mind,” Jamie chuckled, “but I hope I will have the last laugh.”

CHAPTER 18

Nicholas Assheton of Downham led the hunt this sunny, mellow October day, the hounds yapping and squabbling amongst themselves as they vied for first place. They put up a fox by Brownlow and the near-crazy dogs pursued the hapless vixen towards Twiston. Hearing the crashing and hallooing Robinson called his dog into the house, barred his farm gate, then frowned in annoyance as he saw the hunt leaping over his fences, breaking them down and trampling hens and geese in their wake. He saw a streak of rusty brown on the hillside and silently wished Godspeed to the fox as he went outside to clear up what he could of the damage which happened several times each winter. The hunt kills more hens than the foxes, he thought bitterly and I dare not ask to be compensated for my fences, I'd probably end up in the stocks for daring to criticise my 'betters'.

He was suddenly aware of a lone horseman cantering by, he hurried to the gate as Richard

Baldwin of Wheathead approached. Not knowing whether to acknowledge this unpopular man he hesitated and was surprised when Baldwin drew rein and spoke first.

"Greetings Robinson, I see you have a great deal to tidy as a result of the hunt."

"Happens every time sir and I've no redress," Tom replied.

"The gentry in these parts, and aye over the country have little respect for the working man who puts the food in their bellies. If they are not chasing stags or foxes they are trampling the moors after the grouse and pheasant," Baldwin spoke angrily.

"Things won't change, we just have to accept it," Tom spoke bitterly.

"There'll come a day when they will have to account for themselves, I promise you," Baldwin looked grim.

"Not in our time, that is sure," Tom all the while thinking Baldwin has never passed the time of day before, "What does he want?"

He was shortly to find out.

Baldwin's horse was restless, he patted the animal's neck, Tom looked surprised thinking he had only previously seen the man using his whips on the poor creature!

Speaking rather too casually, Baldwin broke the pregnant silence.

"Have you seen young Jamie Device round here?" Tom was immediately on his guard, he had no liking for Baldwin, a known puritan and bully and he wondered what the man's interest portended.

He spoke nonchalantly, "I usually see him around Roughlee, he does odd jobs for Mistress Nutter."

"The talk in Colne is about the lad's friendship with the Hewitt girl, Katherine, the runaway wife," Baldwin said grimly.

"I know nowt about that, I've never seen the girl since her father's funeral, a sad occasion that was," and he shook his head.

"The Demdike brood are a bad lot, begging and giving out their evil potions," Baldwin spoke derisively.

"Can't help being poor, Elizabeth was all right when her husband was alive," Tom countered.

"The papist Device? He got his deserts," Baldwin sneered.

"There's some 'as don't agree with you."

"Meaning yourself, I suppose."

Tom shrugged.

"I'm getting nowhere with you I see, I'll seek the lad elsewhere, I've a matter to discuss with him." Baldwin wheeled his horse and reverting

to his usual manner whipped the animal as they rode away.

Baldwin's hoof-beats receded into the distance and Tom turned towards the house, but a sound caused him to look around. A grinning Jamie vaulted the gate and slapped him on the back.

"I heard you rebuff Baldwin, I know what he wants."

"What is that?"

"I gave warning that the soldiers and Baldwin were on their way to raid a mass," Jamie said cheerfully.

"Don't underestimate him lad, he's an evil man, posing as a Christian," Tom warned.

"I keep out of his way."

"Did you hear him asking about Katherine Hewitt?" Tom asked.

"Yes," came the reply.

"I'm just warning you – don't confide in me, I don't want to know. I'll just say this, you can rely on me, I'm of the old faith, we'll stick together," Tom assured Jamie.

CHAPTER 19

There was great sadness in Roughlee, Dick Nutter had died during a sudden illness, shocking the neighbourhood by his loss. A well respected, hardworking man who would be sorely missed not only by his family. His widow, Alice, was said to be inconsolable, her children feared for her life too as she lay, prostrate with grief in her bed. The local physician Dr. Gabriel implored her to take control of her household, to no avail. Her son Miles wept from grief for his father and fear for his mother.

Word came from Colne that Ben Hewitt was also ill and shortly after that he had died. Katherine now settled in Kittycaul house was surprised by the arrival of Tom Hartley. She looked at him in fear, no-one had ever been to the house.

“You have inherited Ben’s house, the constable is looking for you my dear,” he told her.

"I don't want to leave here," she protested.

"You must come down and claim your inheritance," Tom said, "You are quite safe to do so, you have committed no crime."

"But I want to stay here," she insisted.

"You may return here if you wish, there will be those willing to buy Ben's house, it is centrally situated and there are butchers wanting his trade and also his slaughterhouse. You will not be poor again dear, use the money wisely. I came to tell you because Jamie is being watched and he asked me to bring you to my house and thence to Colne. So that no-one would know where you are staying."

"I want to see my mother. Despite everything I have missed her. Will you take me to her, she will go with me to Colne," Katherine entreated him.

"I remember your mother was unkind to you in the matter of your marriage to Ben Hewitt," Tom reminded her.

"She changed, she was sorry, I do not bear her a grudge," Katherine was quite definite.

Riding in Tom's cart Katherine came to Roughlee to the house, now in mourning, where her mother was working. Miles Nutter came out to greet her.

"Katherine, stranger, do you want to see your mother?" he shook her by the hand.

"I'm sorry my mother has not yet recovered from my father's death," he told her.

"I was sorry to hear the sad news," she replied.

Katherine's mother was brought from the kitchen to see her daughter.

"My dear," she said, "you are pregnant, you poor thing," she embraced her daughter and a tear ran down her cheek.

"Mother, you will have heard that Ben is dead and I am to have his house."

"Katherine," her mother said excitedly, "do you want me to come and look after you then?"

"No, Mother, I do not want to live at Colne. I will sell it. I want you to come and help me claim Ben's estate," she replied.

"I understand dear. Actually I am needed here as Mistress Nutter is still unable to run the household and Anne Redfern and myself have to organise everything. I will see Anne, she may spare me for an hour or two." Nancy went into the house.

"Tom it is good of you to give your time to helping me," she walked to the horse, patting its nose, the animal snorted and muzzled her face.

"Your father was a good friend of mine, I am happy to help you. How could you walk

to Colne and back in your condition?" he asked, smiling at her.

Nancy came out, with Anne behind her, the four of them chatted for a while before Tom helped the women up onto his cart and they began their journey to Colne.

The formalities over and probate set in motion Tom took Katherine and her mother to the house from which both had fled.

"I will take some pots and pans with me Mother, I am short of cooking utensils," Katherine said, gathering together what could be carried in the cart.

The constable had secured the house following Ben's funeral, knowing his widow would be the beneficiary.

Katherine and her mother searched the house, finding small sums of money which Katherine took with her. Tom went out for bread and pies and they were able to find some of Ben's ale to refresh themselves.

"I am free of the fear of him taking my baby anyway and we will survive on the proceeds of the house and slaughterhouse. The constable said people owed Ben money and should be honest enough to pay. He is taking care of that for me."

Back at Roughlee, Jamie was waiting, anxious to know how things had gone.

"I had to swear to a JP that I was the widow entitled to Ben's estate as he had not left a will," she explained to Jamie.

"Everyone knows you are the widow," Jamie said indignantly.

"Yes, but these things have to be done officially," she assured him.

"I will come to you when your baby is due, that is if you will take me Tom?" Nancy said.

"Jamie's mother is to help at that time, and his grandmother, they are experienced as you know," Katherine told her. Nancy bit back a sharp retort at this news, but had the grace to keep quiet after exchanging a look with Tom.

"Jamie has kept me alive these past months Mother," Katherine felt the need to assure her mother of this fact.

"Well I won't ask where you are living, what I don't know I can't tell," her mother remarked.

"I should be safe now," Katherine said.

"Jamie Device isn't safe from Baldwin, he may search you out through him. His daughter died and now he is blaming the Demdike and threatening to send for the witchfinder man appointed by King James," she replied.

"How could Jamie's grandmother have killed anybody? She is just a poor old woman struggling for a living. She can cure a lot of

ailments with her use of herbs. If the patient dies it is not necessarily her fault, she tries her best." Katherine took Jamie's arm, "Come back with me on the cart. I am so hungry and tired."

"You could eat here," her mother assured her.

"No, I can't wait, the pies we had will keep me going until I get home," she replied, "I am glad we are friends mother. Tom, would you bring Mother to see me when I have had the baby?"

"Of course I will. Now we had better be going, the night is drawing in and it looks like rain," Tom looked anxiously at the grey sky. "Look, the leaves on the trees are turning over, a definite sign of rain."

Katherine and Jamie discussed with Tom how she could have hens now, she would have money to buy corn and the coming winter did not present the hardship she had been envisaging prior to her inheritance, She could buy coal, Tom told her, he would bring it in his cart, she was sure to be warm and be able to cook on the coal fire. She felt secure in the knowledge that Tom as well as James was looking after her interests.

CHAPTER 20

December brought a blinding, silent fall of snow, burying the sheep in the hills and the hovels in the valley. During the brief, dark days Katherine was glad of the company of Gypsy. She was becoming ungainly as her pregnancy proceeded. She could feel the baby kick and she became possessive of the coming child. No longer resenting Ben's part in its conception.

The sale of Ben's properties had gone through and Katherine bought Kittycaul House off Elizabeth Southern, thus making life easier for the family at Malkin Tower. They were able to have their roof repaired and buy a horse.

Richard Baldwin glowered as he passed Malkin Tower on his way to the market. Everyone knew how the apparent improvement in the family's circumstances had come about, but no-one knew exactly where Katherine was living. The Justice of the Peace who had overlooked the sale had respected

their pleas for privacy and Elizabeth Southernns who was known to everyone as 'the Demdike', had dug into the earth floor of Malkin Tower and produced deeds from a small oak box, long buried. So it had been true, Kittycaul House had belonged to her first husband, Howgate the Martyr.

Katherine had managed to stop herself from worrying that her deformity would be passed on to the baby. She refused to accept the possibility. She took her raspberry leaf tea each day and prayed for herself and the unborn child each night.

With the dark days slowly passing Katherine was accepting of the infrequency of Jamie's visits. She was glad the responsibility he had taken upon himself had lessened because of her stocks of coal, bags of flour, eggs from her chickens, which up to now had escaped the attention of the foxes. She had to struggle through the banks of snow to feed the hens and collect the eggs, but she found this exhilarating.

Tom Hartley called regularly bringing her news from the villages, and maybe a plump cock chicken or a nice duck to boil. When the weather began to improve in late February he brought tools and mended her hen pens, and her fences and he rebuilt the stone walls

around the property. She now had a black and white cat called Fancy which had surprised her and gypsy by giving birth to three kittens which tumbled over each other, scratching and biting playfully.

"I'm going to bring your mother to see you next week," Tom told Katherine, "she is worrying about you."

"I will be glad to see her," Katherine mentally went through her provisions, "What can I make for her," she asked.

Tom laughed, "Don't worry, I'll bring a chicken the day before, and vegetables."

True to his word the following week Tom brought Nancy to visit her daughter. The three of them sat round the big oak table, one of the pieces of furniture Tom had brought from Colne in the days following Ben's death.

"This is a lovely house Katherine, imagine the old Demdike owning this and never telling anyone," Nancy said.

"She lived here when she was first married sixty years ago, she told me," she replied, "there are some lovely oak cupboards and my bed is a four-poster but I haven't any drapes. I light a fire before I go to bed."

Nancy was taken on a tour of the house, she was amazed at the turn in her daughter's

fortunes, "some good has come out of your marriage anyway," she remarked.

"Don't talk about it Mother," Katherine said warningly, remembering how caustic her mother could be, "I've paid for all this indirectly believe me."

Katherine had a fleeting sense of sadness as her mother was driven away by Tom. She remembered her father and found it difficult to come to terms with all that had happened in the past year, how her life had changed, and how she missed her father. My old life seems like a dream, or so I feel I will wake up and what is happening now will be a dream.

Towards the end of December the weather became milder. Jamie had visited Katherine regularly and on Christmas Day Tom Robinson had taken her to visit her mother at Roughlee where Mistress Nutter, more or less recovered from her bereavement, made them both welcome. Katherine noticed her mother paid particular attention to Tom and she had smiled to herself at her mother's simpering pleasantries, far removed from the nagging harriidan of her own memories!

The large kitchen table in the house at Roughlee had been laden with food and Mistress Nutter presided over the feast. Old Gabriel, the physician, said grace. The family

friends and servants always ate together on Christmas Day. There was ale and bottles of Bordeaux wine were opened for the more sophisticated. Mutton, beef, ham, and pork pies, custard tarts and rich, fruity Christmas pudding tempted their hearty appetites.

Mistress Nutter packed food for Katherine to take home with her. Not wishing to have to find his way on the stony tracks in darkness they left early. Tom helped her into his cart. She was ungainly now and Katherine's mother had urged her to consider that she herself should come to live with Katherine now she was nearer the birth, but Katherine had refused.

The day after Christmas Katherine hummed happily to herself as she laid her table with the food she had brought home. Jamie and Alison were expected and Gypsy made a nuisance of herself pestering for the tit-bits. Katherine in desperation threw to her! The days were short and Katherine knew Jamie and Alison would stay that night, rather than hurry home before darkness fell.

The rushlights smoked, then twinkled, in the shadowy winter light. Katherine thankfully remembered the tallow candles Mistress Nutter had provided, and carefully lit just two of them.

Gypsy's excited barkings told Katherine her visitors had arrived. She ran through the panelled hallway to draw back the large bolt on the door and let them in. They all started talking at once, laughing, glad to be together. Alison held out a bunch of holly, its berries shining red in the dim candlelight. Jamie had brought a plump cock pheasant. He took it through to the cold larder on the north side of the house.

"I'll pluck the pheasant tomorrow," he said. "I've had it hanging up at the hermit's cottage, daren't take it home for Grandmother to see!"

"I had a lovely time at Mistress Nutter's house yesterday, what did you do?" Katherine asked excitedly.

"Best Christmas for a long while, since Father died, in fact," Alison replied. Jamie nodded in agreement.

"I think Mother is setting herself to pursue Tom Robinson," Katherine told them as they piled plates with food, they laughed at her descriptions of her mother's affected behaviour, but the smiles left their faces at the suggestion Nancy wanted to come and live with her.

"Don't worry, I won't let her because she would not welcome you and you are my friends," she assured them.

"If Tom Robinson falls for her smiles she will be nearer to you anyway," Alison remarked.

"Mother would not be able to find her way alone," Katherine said. "But I want to have my baby here, I hope you will bring your mother when it is time."

"Usually first babies take a while," Alison said. "But there is no certainty."

"We should try and come to see you every day nearer the time," Jamie remarked.

"Tom will come anyway and he will bring your mother if I need her," Katherine was positive of this.

Jamie threw apple logs onto the fire and soon the room was filled with scent.

"It was lucky for me there were so many trees to prune," Katherine held out her hands to the blaze.

"Lucky I swept the chimney too," he laughingly replied.

"I think how lucky I am not to be afraid anymore, no-one hunting for me. I did not wish Ben dead but his death has saved me," Katherine was solemn.

"I have Baldwin after me all the time, so I know what you mean, he doesn't move as fast as me, being on horseback. I can run faster and take shortcuts, but he will punish me for

poaching if he ever catches me,” Jamie stated emphatically.

They crowded together round the embers of the dying fire, wondering what the new year would bring, Gypsy curling up with her head on Katherine’s lap.

CHAPTER 21

March had come in like a lamb and Jamie had laid his traps in Mutton Acre Wood. Few men ventured into the close thickets, which were almost impenetrable, the haunt of rabbits, badgers and foxes and all the myriad of smaller creatures who burrowed and toiled in the hollow trees and fallen logs. The air buzzed with the hum of industrious wildlife. Matt the charcoal burner had his camp on the periphery of the wood. Jamie watched as the man took a tall stake he stuck firmly into the ground, he then began to stack dry, split logs around it. He covered this with a clean layer of leaves, and bracken. Finally earth and ash were moulded and pressed round the stack to seal it, this was a slow and laborious task. When he had finished he straightened his back, stretching himself.

“I will fire this tomorrow lad, in the meantime we’ll eat,” he said.

He walked across the clearing to where a fire smouldered under a rude oven of stone.

Raking with a large stick in the embers he drew out a lump of burned clay.

“Roasted hedgehog,” Jamie beamed. “I’m glad I came this way today.”

With practised hands the charcoal burner took a knife and split the clay down the middle. The needles of the hedgehog were embedded in the clay and the succulent flesh was exposed. He handed half to Jamie saying, “I am lucky I have Romany blood and know how to survive in the countryside.”

Companionably they picked at the lean meat. A cheeky robin flew down to peck at the small bones Matt and Jamie threw amongst the grass.

“Weather could change, Jamie,” Matt remarked as he leaned over to lift a cup of bubbling chicory from the stone oven. He blew on it and when it had cooled he passed it to the boy who drank thirstily.

“I know, I need to see to my snares,” the boy reluctantly rose from his comfortable seat amongst the dry bracken. “I’ll leave you a rabbit if I’m lucky this week.”

Jamie pushed his way through the wood, disturbing magpies which rose into the air with startled cries.

Yes, he was lucky, a terrified rabbit was gasping its last breath in the first trap. Jamie

paid scant attention to its terror. His family had to eat, he took up a stone and put the rabbit out of its agony, stuffing the still-warm body inside his jerkin he moved more slowly, a twig snapped and a squirrel sprang from branch to branch above him.

The sun was now lost behind the clouds and the air smelled of damp and rain. Jamie, his wrists scratched and torn by the skeletons of last autumn's brambles, hurried on. He would return to Malkin Tower with the rabbit. I'll go and see Katherine tomorrow, he thought as he came out onto a track leading towards Twiston. He trudged uphill, past Brownlow and, taking a shortcut he vaulted over a wall, past Higher Higson and on to Coolham, where with a shock he saw men and horses, heart sinking, he recognised Baldwin. He turned around to hurry back the way he had come, he heard a shout behind him, "Poacher," was the cry and horses were mounted, poachers were fair game to hunt down and hanging was the penalty.

Jamie, ran, if he could reach Higher Higson he would be safe, but there was no way he could leave the track for a mile or so. He was scared. His breath was coming in harsh gasps, fumbling with his jacket he dropped the rabbit. At least they wouldn't catch him red-handed.

There was a cry behind him, someone had spied the rabbit, horses were gaining on him and in desperation he tried to climb a tree. He was halfway up, crawling along a branch when there was a sickening creak, the branch broke and as the horseman drew rein Jamie fell from the tree at their feet.

"I knew it would be young Device," Baldwin leapt down from his horse, hauling Jamie to his feet. "You trapped this rabbit."

"No, no," Jamie was terrified.

"I'll have you in the stocks," Baldwin's voice was grim, he pushed the boy to the floor again.

"Leave the lad, he's skin and bone, what do we gain from prosecuting him?" this was Nicholas Assheton, Squire of Downham.

"You are a Justice of the Peace, you should uphold the law," Baldwin rounded on him.

"Justice has to be tempered with mercy, I didn't know I was chasing a boy," Assheton replied.

"Boy or man, poaching is a crime," Baldwin's face was thunderous in his rage. "This boy, as you call him consorts with Papists. His father delivered messages for those of the outlawed faith."

Another of the men, Blaize Hargreaves, spoke up, "His father is dead, the family is

poor. Let the lad go, we are not in danger from him. Who misses a rabbit?"

"That is not the point," Baldwin was angry, he turned on Hargreaves.

"I know your sympathy with Device and his kind, you are all against me, you have taken most of my livelihood with your new mill at Whitehough and now you block punishment for crimes."

He turned to Assheton.

"The law is the law and you must enforce it," he glared at Assheton from under bushy eyebrows, whilst he kept his booted foot on Jamie who shrank from him, his hand over his face.

Assheton was annoyed, who was Baldwin, a mere miller, to tell him his duty?

"We've had our sport, the lad is punished enough, it would seem the family will not eat tonight," he wheeled his horse.

"Let the lad go, now," he ordered Baldwin and as Jamie rose slowly to his feet, he spoke curtly to him. "Out of my sight, run now, and keep off my land in future."

Jamie ran, and ran, he knew Baldwin would come after him if he could. It was going dark, but with his peasant cunning and local knowledge he was soon in Stubbs Wood. He made for the hermit's refuge and pushing open

the door he collapsed onto what was left of a bed, his last thoughts before total exhaustion sent him into a deep sleep, was that he was halfway to Kittycaul House and he would visit Katherine tomorrow.

Jamie awoke with a start, looking round him, where was he? He felt cold, he was shivering. Realisation dawned and the events of the previous day rushed into his mind. He drew a coat round him. Katherine had left it in case she was ever caught there in the rain. It was damp and not much use. He staggered over to the cupboard and retrieved a tinder box and flint. His hands were so cold, but there was once-burnt wood in the hearth, like charcoal, it would light if he persevered. He struck again and again, at last he had a feeble spark. With renewed vigour he struck again into the thin sticks exposed. His diligence was rewarded by a small flame, he daren't breathe on it in case it went out. The flame flickered, becoming smaller, oh dear was it going out? Dare I just blow it? Yes I will, he leaned down and gently breathed onto the flame, it flickered again, then caught onto a dry twig which blazed up and Jamie held his hands over the warmth with gratitude. Oh what a simple pleasure, but appreciated at that moment in the dark and musty room. Jamie, known to be a simple soul,

could be profound on occasion, and he thought to himself that a King's Ransom would be no good to him today, but the flames were warming him and he rocked, his arms crossed, the firelight now casting strange shadows on the walls. A mouse peeped round the side of the fireplace, nose quivering, its eyes dark and gleaming. Jamie smiled, "I've nothing for you, I'm hungry myself." As if understanding, the mouse sat on its haunches and began to wash its face.

As warmth engulfed his body Jamie began to feel stronger. Katherine may have left chicory, I could make myself a drink, he thought.

Good, at the back of the cupboard was a pot full of chicory. It's a bit mouldy on the top he thought, but scraping the mould away he found the chicory under it to be acceptable. He put the pot down, taking a ladle he went outside to the hermit's well and filled it with water. The charcoal was glowing now. Holding the ladle over the fire he waited for it to heat. The mouse, unafraid, contemplated the unusual habits of humans, from its vantage point half in and half out of its hole!

As the ladle of water and chicory cooled Jamie put both hands round it and sipped slowly. He had no honey to sweeten the drink

but the warmth succoured him and he let his mind wander. His thoughts not surprisingly turned to Baldwin. It seemed to Jamie the man had always been there, the bane of not only his life, but his mother's and grandmother's. He ruminated on the events in his family. His earliest recollections seemed to involve Baldwin. His father's drowning, his mother's time in the stocks being pelted with bad eggs and dung. Why does he hate us? The man is so bad even his own son has refused to work for him. Images of retribution floated through Jamie's mind and then came a deep realisation that he was a poor peasant boy, what could he do against someone as abundantly provided for as the miller? Only try and keep away from him, like I've always done, he acknowledged to himself, but why does he hate me?

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Baldwin had been thwarted again, he nursed his grievances over the next few days. His family trod carefully round him, recognising his anger. He still grieved for his daughter and although it was now several years since her death, this had further soured his already angry disposition.

"I will search out young Device and deal

with him when I am alone,” he muttered to himself as he threw bags of flour onto a stack in the corner of the mill. “He will not escape me forever.”

CHAPTER 22

Katherine was awakened suddenly in the dead of night by a deep pain in her stomach. She cried out and Gypsy jumped onto the bed, licking her face.

"Oh, Gypsy," Katherine hugged the dog to her. "I think the baby is coming and I am all alone." Another pain, this time in her back, caused her to take in great gulps of air. Gypsy whimpered because she was held so tightly. The pain stopped and Katherine swung her legs over the side of the bed, groping for a shawl. Slowly she walked out of the bedroom and along the passage. Gypsy, as if understanding a difference in her demeanour slunk despondently beside her. Another pain gripped her as she reached the top of the staircase and she held onto the newell post slipping to the floor. When the pain abated she moved slowly down the stairs. Half sitting on each step. She began to feel sick and dizzy and lay on the floor in the hallway for a while. Feeling better she staggered towards the kitchen throwing

kindling wood onto the ashes of yesterday's fire, reaching for the bellows she was able to start the fire and she rested in the warmth. Thinking desperately what she should do. She wasn't fit to go looking for help certainly. Would Jamie come today? Where was he? She looked at Gypsy who lay beside her, her head on her paws, her eyes mournful and questioning.

"How clever are you Gypsy?" she spoke to the dog who rose to her feet, tail wagging.

Could I send her for help? Would she go? Questions raced round in Katherine's mind. Then another pain assailed her and she rolled over, holding her stomach, biting her lip, stifling a sob.

When the pain stopped she struggled to the door, calling Gypsy, on the step she held onto the dog and pulled her down the step, pointing her towards the path to the hermit's hut, maybe, just maybe, he would be there.

"Go, go for Jamie." She pushed Gypsy away, but the animal seemed confused, reaching for her footwear Katherine struggled outside, pulling Gypsy towards the path.

"Go, go," she pleaded. "Go for Jamie." She then returned to the house and closed the door. Gypsy, her head on one side, looked at the closed door, then her nose twitched as if

to find a scent. Katherine, now looking out of the window watched as Gypsy headed along the path in the direction of the hermit's hut.

Jamie was awakened from his reverie by the scratching on the door, and a sharp "Woof", he opened it. Gypsy almost fell in, panting against the open door.

"Why, Gypsy, where is Katherine? What has happened?" Gypsy went back to the door, wagging her tail and barking. Jamie took stock of the situation. She wants me to go with her, he thought, the baby must have started, but Katherine will need Mother, and maybe Grandmother. It will take me over an hour to get to Kittycaul, then a few hours back to Malkin Tower, what must I do? I must not waste time. I will go to Hartley, he will go to Malkin Tower for help.

Jamie tied a cloth round Gypsy as a signal to Katherine that help was on the way, he carried her to the path, patted her and shouted, "Go, back to Katherine." The intelligent animal needed no second bidding, she was off, back along the track.

Jamie, his tiredness forgotten, reached Tom's house. Tom had just finished milking his small herd of cows. He was placing the containers in his cart, and looked up in surprise at the panting boy.

“Tom, please help, Katherine needs Mother and Grandmother.”

“I’ll bring them. I’ve milk to drop off at Barley and Thorneyholme. I’ll make Roughlee my last call and go straight to Malkin Tower. You go back to Katherine. Don’t panic, you’ve helped with lambing. She may take hours but just keep calm.” Tom finished roping the containers of milk onto his cart and with a concerned wave at Jamie he set off along the stony, rutted track towards Barley.

Jamie hurried along towards the hermit’s cottage, then followed the paths through the wood, he crossed Ings Beck which swirled angrily round his ankles, swollen with spring rain. He knew Tom would have to take the cart via Rimington, which would take longer, but at least his own efforts to clear the track in the last six months would make it easier for him.

Gypsy’s excited barking told Katherine Jamie had arrived. She lay by the fire in the kitchen. Jamie knelt beside her and she burst into tears of relief, the very fact that Jamie was there gave her strength. He made her a hot drink and she sipped it gratefully whilst he went outside to chop wood for the fire.

The time seemed to drag by, her pains were coming more quickly.

“What if the baby comes before your mother arrives?” Katherine asked anxiously.

“I’ll help you, it’s the same as lambing, never fear,” he replied.

Katherine had to be content with this and as another pain caused her to cry out Jamie held her hands tightly, until it once more abated.

Another hour went by, the pains alternated between periods of calm, the firelight flickered on the walls and the anxiety they both felt was palpable in the dimly lit room.

Jamie remembered when his little sister Jennet was born he had been made to boil up pans of water. He set about the task now, glad to be occupied.

For a little while Katherine had some respite from the pain and she fell into an uneasy slumber. She was awakened by Gypsy’s loud barking and Jamie rushed to the door as the rattle of hooves and harness heralded the arrival of Tom and Elizabeth Device.

Katherine had always been somewhat in awe of Jamie’s mother, but on this occasion she was so grateful to see her she reached out her hands. Elizabeth knelt beside her. Compassion for the girl gave Elizabeth’s disfigurement a softness.

“How often do your pains come?” she asked.

"I think maybe every ten minutes now," Katherine replied.

"It won't be long now my dear, be brave."

Afterwards Katherine could never remember the pain and struggle. All she remembered was hearing the baby cry. Through the blur of faintness, the smokiness of the room, Elizabeth's smiling face, she had only one thought, she tried to sit up. "Let me see," she cried.

"You have a fine son," the other woman assured her.

"His back, let me see his back," she demanded.

The red-faced, screaming baby was handed to her, she looked wonderingly into the face of her son, Elizabeth turned the squirming little body onto its stomach, and slowly Katherine's fingers stroked the smooth softness of his back.

"Perfect, dear," said Elizabeth.

Katherine had burst into tears of joy.

CHAPTER 23

Katherine named her baby David. She was enthralled by him. She stroked his soft, downy head and hummed lullabies into his ear. She marvelled at his tiny fingers and toes, the exquisite nails and his sweet face with the dimpled chin.

A couple of weeks went by and she began to be perturbed about David, he seemed to be sick after every feed, he cried constantly. She confided in Jamie one day when he arrived to chop wood for her. "I am worried about David, he cannot be thriving, he is so often sick."

They looked down at the baby who was crying, causing his cradle to rock, his small fists were held to his mouth one after the other, he was sucking at them and Katherine said, "He is hungry, even though I have fed him."

"Grandmother will know what you must do, wrap him up, it is a nice day, we will go to Malkin Tower", Jamie decided on this course of action. His grandmother was getting frail

these days and he didn't think she could walk to Kittycaul House.

Katherine held David against her chest whilst Jamie wrapped a shawl tightly round them both. They made their way through the wood, crossing Ings Beck which was swollen with recent rain. Jamie had to arrange large stones for Katherine to use as stepping stones to enable her to cross. She was nervous and afraid of slipping on the moss. They passed through Mutton Acre wood and trudged steadily towards the cross-roads at Twiston. As they passed Coolham, Tom Robinson came towards them.

"You look tired Katherine, where are you going?" he asked. They explained and Tom insisted on taking them to Malkin Tower to see Grandmother Demdyke.

David's crying intensified as the horse-drawn cart was pulled to a halt outside Malkin Tower.

Jennet came running out excitedly, trying to peep into the shawl to see the baby.

"He isn't well Jennet, please help me down," Katherine asked quite curtly in her worry, and Jennet shrank back.

"Oh sorry, I didn't mean to snap at you" Katherine felt sorry for the girl.

Jamie's mother was now ushering them into

the house which was warm from a large log fire in the inglenook fireplace. Several pans, bubbling merrily, hung from an iron bar over the fire. A small black dog jumped up at Katherine, barking.

"Fancy will you stop your noise?" Elizabeth gave the dog a slap and it slunk away into a corner, disturbing two kittens who had been sleeping peacefully!

"What be the trouble?" a shrill voice came from what looked like a bundle of clothes in a rocking chair.

"Oh Grandmother, Katherine's baby is ailing, he can't keep his milk down", Jamie took David and placed him on the old woman's knee. The baby continued to cry, his knees drawn up, small fists pummelling the air.

Katherine knelt at the old woman's feet, "he keeps being sick", she told her, "what can I do?"

"Lizzie", Demdyke beckoned her daughter, "the egg treatment, yes, get me the white of an egg". She turned to Jamie "you boy, get a container of boiled water and a spoon of honey", he ran to do her bidding.

Katherine watched anxiously as preparations were made, all the time the old woman held David face down on her knee stroking his back. He had stopped crying and every

now and again hiccuped and sucked at his fingers.

Elizabeth brought an egg she had separated, to her mother. Boiling water was added gradually and a minute drop of honey. Taking a spoon, Elizabeth stirred the liquid and Demdyke turned David over, cradling him in the crook of her arm. Elizabeth passed a spoonful of the liquid to her mother who blew on it softly to cool it. She then took the spoon to the baby's mouth and his little tongue came out and licked, and Grandmother was able to pour a little of the liquid into his mouth, it ran out at the corners, but he gulped and swallowed more. They all watched, and waited. At last five minutes went by. There was no sound but the food simmering in the pans and the crackle of sparks from the fire.

"He's keeping it down", Elizabeth looked at her mother who in turn looked at Katherine.

"Some babies can't take milk my dear, he is one, you will have to bind your breasts tightly to send your milk back. It will be a tiring time feeding him this mixture by spoon for many months, but it is the only way". They all watched as David was given several more spoonfuls of the mixture. Katherine curled up on the floor by the fire and became drowsy.

Elizabeth threw a cloak on her, "sleep dear,
your baby will thrive now".

CHAPTER 24

David thrived and life went on at Kittycaul House, but it was not to last.

Jamie went to Colne market each week and came back to Katherine with the local gossip. He did not tell her of the rumours concerning the appointment of a Witchfinder General in Lancashire who was to be paid money to find witches.

King James, in his palaces in London, had written a book in which he recorded his belief in witchcraft. Agitation and real fear began to permeate throughout the land. To the ignorant and uneducated of the population the fact that the King believed in witches made them believe it too.

In a frenzy they planted rowan trees round their houses to ward off evil spirits, hammered horse shoes over their doors and even hung rabbits' paws round the necks of their children.

The Old Demdike and her daughter Elizabeth were once more the object of derision and contempt.

In an effort to quell the mounting hysteria against them they organised a feast to take place at Malkin Tower on Good Friday.

Katherine heard about the meeting and persuaded Jamie to accompany her. Tom Hartley gave them a lift and Katherine's mother looked after David. No-one realised what dreadful repercussions would follow.

Richard Baldwin passed that way and his warped mind turned the innocent feast into a witches' coven.

Demanding an interview with Roger Nowell the local magistrate, Baldwin laid his evidence before him. Nowell was then compelled to act.

CHAPTER 25

Katherine, writhing against the rope that held her, thought she was going mad. She had never dreamed that this could happen to her. She was on the village green, in the now godly county of Lancaster, with a hooting jeering crowd in front of her. She was against a post, her hands tied fast behind it and a rope as tightly round her middle, and she had been there for the last two hours. Left and right of her were other posts, meant for the tethering of horses, but now with a woman or man tied to each. She had seen them come, dragged in one by one to be made fast till wanted.

A roar came from the crowd, bringing her back to her present misery and the thought of where she was. Men were carrying out a long heavy table that was surely from someone's kitchen, and behind them came the Mayor, attended by the Constable.

She twisted round, and she was looking again at Alison Device, who was against the next post and tied as tightly to it.

A man had come slowly into the market place with two of the Watch to clear a way for him, a big corpulent fellow, who strutted importantly and cast appraising glances at the Mayor, the dignitaries, and the men and women who waited for him, helpless against their posts; and this surely must be the man who was called Pricker. He was in Lancashire at the invitation of several towns, each of them promising his welcome and his fee of twenty shillings for every witch he found; and he ususally found several.

The crowd was a quiver of excitement as he walked slowly down the line of posts, gravely followed by the Mayor and the others. Coldly he looked each of the women up and down, and then he went stalking back to the clear space in the centre where the table waited. He spoke a word to the Mayor and another to the Constable, who went forward at once with four men of the Watch. The Pricker's pointing arm showed which woman they should take, Katherine. She was untied, pulled from the post, and dragged struggling to the table, then laid upon it and ruthlessly held down while her clothes were torn from her. They spared her nothing, laying her naked as at birth, while she first screamed, then moaned and sobbed and almost ceased to

struggle. Four men held her fast, and the Pricker moved forward, looking down at her with his dark cold eyes. He leaned across her, rubbing his big hands over her, prodding and feeling at her. He spoke, and she was turned over, face down now, and again he felt and probed. He was looking for the witch's mark.

Then he found it, or seemed to. Suddenly, with a gesture that was surely for the crowd, he was pointing to her back, while the men held her arm stretched out. The Mayor stepped forward, peering closely and seeming a little doubtful. The Pricker turned to him aggressively.

"See it well," he boomed. "It's the Devil's mark – his brand. Wings! Put there to mark his own."

'Own?'

"What less is a witch? D'ye not know it?"
The big voice was swelling louder

"Wings?" The Mayor stood staring at them.
"May God have mercy!"

Katherine's fate was sealed.

CHAPTER 26

The inhabitants of the Pendle countryside from Colne to Whalley were in shock. The trials of witches had been held at Lancaster Castle and eminent judges came from London to try them. Alice Nutter had been hanged. The Demdyke had been hanged and her daughter Elizabeth. The Bulcocks from Barley, all these people and Katherine Hewitt. Katherine Hewitt, Jamie and Alison, the lifelong friends. And what was to become of Katherine's son? He was being cared for at the moment by Katherine's mother. The house where Alice Nutter had lived was abandoned, her children staying with other relatives. Everywhere no-one dare to speak. No-one dare to look another neighbour in the eye. There was guilt felt for they knew not what. The soldiers had come and rounded up those local people. What could anybody do? They were poor, they were no match for the magistrates. Richard Baldwin was in his house at Wheathead, ignored, no-one bought his

flour. No-one went near the house. He was believed to be responsible for summoning the witchfinder.

Katherine's mother held the deeds for Kittycaul House. She had returned soon after Katherine's death and removed all the papers belonging to the house. She married Tom Hartley and brought up David. But she always told Katherine's son that he had a house in the middle of the wood and the boy would look out across the wood in the shadow of Pendle hill and wonder where his house was and he became determined to go there one day and when he was fifteen years old he persuaded Tom Hartley to take him. They took axes and cut their way through and came upon the ruin of Kittycaul House and from then on the house became inhabited and down through the centuries people had happy times and lived out their lives but in every other generation the curse appeared and was handled separately and differently by each.

Notes:

Reginald Scott "Discoverie of Witchcraft" (1584) poured scorn on a belief in witches power and was scathing about the antics of their persecutors. He wrote of the tyranny and barbarous cruelty and absurd inventions of the witch-hunters.

James I ordered copies of this book to be destroyed whilst promoting his own (or the Bishop of Winchester?) book on witchcraft "Demonology", and appointed "Witchfinder Generals", armed with bodkins or prickers, who investigated warts and moles.

John Webster "Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft", (1677) like Scott he attacked with vigour the cruelties the witch-belief encouraged.

Webster wrote: Divers innocent persons lost their lives. Men and women were accused of supposed witchcraft, and were so unchristianly and inhumanely handled as to be stripped naked and laid upon tables to be searched (nay even in their most privy parts) for these supposed witch marks.

In 1736 came the last of the witchcraft acts with a more enlightened attitude prevailing, until in 1951 the witchcraft act of George II was replaced by the Fraudulent Mediums Act.

The last witches to be hanged in England

were three “very old, decrepit and impotent women”, who were executed at Exeter, in 1684, and Alice Mallard of Exeter in 1686.

BOOK 2

William's Story

I had learned to live with what I saw as the Curse and when I married a girl after the war she didn't mind. Things were different in those days. People didn't go bathing, they didn't go sunbathing, they didn't expose their bodies. So very few people were aware of my affliction but time went by. My sons did not inherit, but my grandchild – what if I ever had a grandchild?

CHAPTER 1

2002

Henry, William's son, was absolutely delighted when he called to see his parents at Kittycaul House that Sunday afternoon.

"Martha is pregnant. You're going to be grand-parents."

William and Annie looked at each other. How thrilling, how wonderful, but at the back of their minds remained the haunting wonder of what would happen. The sons never knew about their father's affliction. What would happen? William was delighted to hear the news and was sure that over the centuries, surely, the curse had disappeared. Surely the genes couldn't carry things down hundreds of years. Could they? Could they really?

The time came for Martha to have a scan. The first was wonderful. They had a little card with a photograph of the curled-up baby and brought it home delightedly for William and Annie to see.

"This is your first grandchild."

The months went by. The pregnancy progressed satisfactorily, everything was fine. Martha was in tip-top health and when the scan was called for at seven months they went with happy hearts. They waited their turn at the maternity suite in the area with all the other pregnant mothers waiting to go in. The consultant came out and shook hands with them and took them into the room to have this scan. Then he asked them to wait a while. They saw him in his white coat walking hurriedly down the passage. Then he came back and asked them to join him in the privacy of his office.

"Was something the matter, was something terribly wrong with the baby?"

"There's nothing wrong with the baby my dears. There's just an abnormality in his back and we can't put our finger on it at all. Could you help? Is there something in the family, perhaps something that you would remember that would cause this."

Henry and Martha looked at each other. "I can't think of anything at all. I'll have to tell Mother and Father, we'll ask them."

They went to Kittycaul House. One look at their faces caused William and Annie to look at each other. God, no, please. God, no. William murmured to himself.

“What is it? What’s the matter?”

“The scan has shown up an abnormality in the baby’s back. Could you give us any idea what this might be. What have you held back from us? Perhaps there is something that we should have always known.”

Slowly, William sat down. “Your baby will be fine and well but I have to show you something.” And with heavy heart he turned and lifted his shirt, exposing his back . . .

Is this the end?

DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES
CAME THE CURSE.

THE DESTINY OF BOTH MALE AND
FEMALE, IMMUTABLE, INEXORABLE,
AND FOR KATHERINE HEWITT IN THE
17TH CENTURY- FATAL.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN THE 21ST
CENTURY?

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